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BLAKE SHELTON
saddles up for role
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THIS WEEK'S **NASH**
FEATURING THE **ACM NOMINEES**
16 ADDITIONAL PAGES INSIDE!

COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORY
MARCH 2, 2015



THREE OF A KIND

REBA McENTIRE AND BROOKS & DUNN
GET READY FOR A FULL HOUSE IN VEGAS

INSIDE!

SHERYL CROW
shares happy
and healthy
recipes

AARON TIPPIN
25 years
of musical
muscle

The fearless
RYAN BINGHAM
unleashes a
new album

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WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF RIGHT NOW!

THE HIT LIST

Outside the Norm

► Rather than pull the plug on his Outsiders World Tour show in Salt Lake City after a stomach bug knocked out most of his band and crew, **ERIC CHURCH** treated 16,000 fans to a largely solo 19-song acoustic set. In addition, Eric promised to return to SLC on Memorial Day for a makeup show with his full band.



Tom Brady Bunch

◀ It was part Queen, part *Brady Bunch*, and it was a whole lot of fun when **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** and **BLAKE SHELTON** joined Jimmy Fallon, The Roots, Sam Smith, Ariana Grande, Meghan Trainor, Usher, One Direction and Christina Aguilera for an a cappella version of "We Are the Champions" in honor of the Super Bowl.



Oh Baby, Ruthie

▼ Country Weekly staffers get to hear a lot of music in the studio of our neighbors at *America's Morning Show*, but **RUTHIE COL-LINS** brought her listening room to us in the form of a vintage Airstream trailer, aptly named Amelia Earstream. It was hard to take our eyes (and ears) off of this country beauty, but the trailer was so stunning, it's going to get its own piece in a future issue, too.



Roxie Lady

◀ As many predicted, **JENNIFER NETTLES** got rave reviews for her debut as Roxie Hart in the Broadway musical *Chicago*. We'll have a story in an upcoming issue about Jennifer's new role, so stay tuned.



Total Rush

▲ **TIM RUSHLOW** turned Nash-VILLE into Nash-VEGAS at a recent music industry party. Instead of Little Texas, Tim's Big Band, complete with horns and strings, performed swinging standards from Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and Bobby Darin. In a shimmering silver suit, he looked swagger-ific and, once again, proved his depth and talent as one country music's brightest stars.

THE JUKEBOX

Essential songs from
the artists featured
in this issue!

Reba McEntire and
Brooks & Dunn

"If You See Him/If
You See Her"

Justin Moore

"If Heaven Wasn't
So Far Away"

Sam Hunt

"Leave the Night On"

Lady Antebellum

"Freestyle"

Asleep at the Wheel

"The Letter That Johnny
Walker Read"

Josh Thompson

"Way Out Here"

Aaron Tippin

"You've Got to Stand
for Something"

Big Smo

"Workin'"

Kelsea Ballerini

"Love Me Like
You Mean It"

Ryan Bingham

"Broken Heart Tattoos"

T. Graham Brown

"Hell and High Water"

Big & Rich

"Look at You"

Ryan Culwell

"Red River"

Look for this
Country Weekly
playlist on **rdio!**

COVER STORY

44

Dream Team

Las Vegas has become the home of the entertainment extravaganza, and the self-styled Sin City has a doozy on the horizon starring Reba McEntire with a reunified Brooks & Dunn. The three pals share their thoughts on their Las Vegas residency and reminisce about a couple of their former tours.



24 | **Wills Salute**

Those swing masters Asleep at the Wheel bring out the stars for a tribute album to Bob Wills.

50 | **Aaron Tippin**

Find out how the muscular music man plans to celebrate his 25th year in the business.

56 | **Kelsea Ballerini**

The red-hot newcomer braves the winter chill to film her new video in Nashville.

58 | **Ryan Bingham**

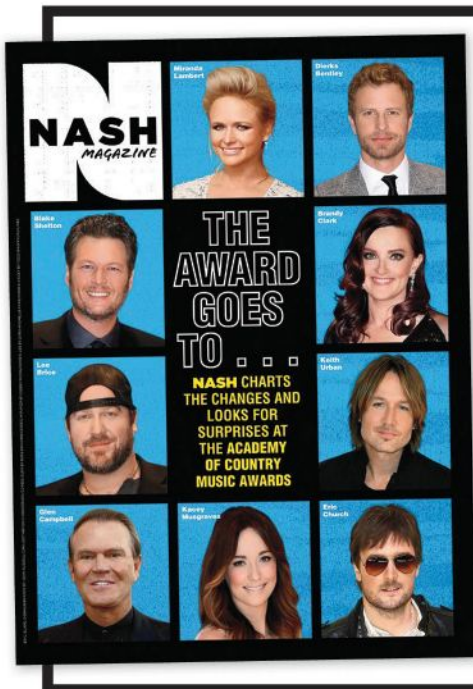
No cellphone, no Internet, no problem for the Oscar-winning singer/songwriter.

60 | **T. Graham Brown**

His Grammy-nominated album *Forever Changed* reflects the soulful singer's renewed lifestyle.

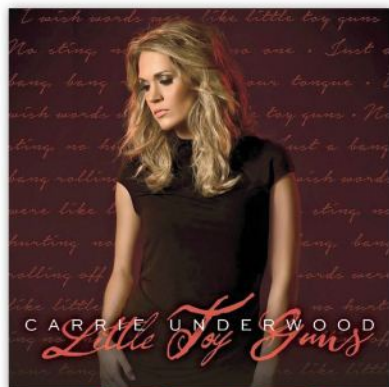
64 | **Make-A-Wish**

Scotty McCreery and Gary Allan bring music and cheer to a special event for some great kids.



27 NASH

The nominations are out for the 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards, with Miranda Lambert and Dierks Bentley leading the nominee parade. We'll give you a preview of the major categories, along with a juicy morsel of food for thought. And make sure to catch up with Justin Moore and his all-female household.



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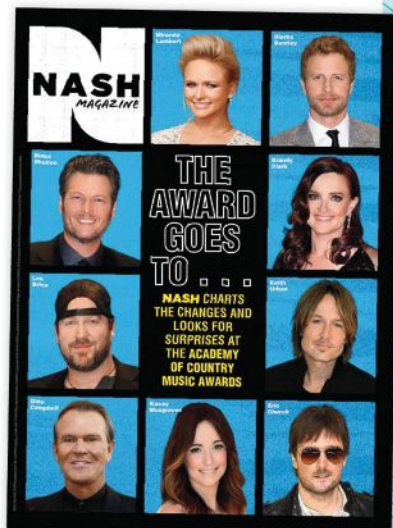
Dear Readers:

It's the reunion to end all reunions—**REBA McENTIRE** and **BROOKS & DUNN** are reuniting this summer in Las Vegas. Take Reba and put her together with **RONNIE DUNN** and **KIX BROOKS** and what do you get? A superstar spectacular at Caesars Palace. Not only will the trio be reuniting onstage, but Brooks & Dunn are back together for this special appearance. Could this be a permanent reunion? Our sources tell us no, they are just getting back together for the Vegas shows. But we can always hold out hope.

Country Weekly sat down with the three superstars and talked about what we can expect from this show and how over the years they've formed their very own dinner club.

In this issue we have a special feature on **AARON TIPPIN**. Aaron and his family have always been friends of the magazine and we've covered many of his events over the years. Now Aaron is celebrating 25 years in the music business (hard to believe it's been that long) and we sat down with him to look back over his successful run in country music.

In this week's section of *NASH* we take a look at the top nominees for the **ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS**. *NASH* charts the changes and looks for surprises at this year's 50th anniversary show. We check in on ladies' man **JUSTIN MOORE**, we see how **CHASE RICE** and **CHASE BRYANT** stack up against each other, we get inside **JOSH THOMPSON**'s truck and so much more.



See you next week!


LISA KONICKI, Editor in Chief

Tell Us What YOU Think!

MAIL: Letters, *Country Weekly*,
506 2nd Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210.

SEND E-MAIL TO: letters@countryweekly.com

Please include your name, address and daytime phone number with all correspondence. *Country Weekly* assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material, including, but not limited to, photographs, artwork, manuscripts and letters. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

SISTER ACT

Thank you for the mention of The Davis Sisters in two recent issues [*Charts*, Jan. 5; *The Mix*, Jan. 12]. Their debut single, "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know," was the first recording by a female duo to reach No. 1 (back in 1953), and it also crossed over to No. 18 on the pop charts. I hope that you will consider doing a story on them and how their career was cut short by the death of Betty Jack Davis in an auto crash before the song topped the charts, and how Skeeter continued on for a successful solo career.

— LARRY L. STOUT
Rushville, Ind.

LITTLE JIMMY LOVE

I just picked up the latest edition of your magazine and was disappointed to see Miranda on the cover [*Feb. 2*]. I love Miranda, but Little Jimmy Dickens deserved the cover! I wonder how many other country music fans feel the same as I do.

— SHELIA MARTINEZ
Piscataway, N.J.

KING & QUEEN OF HEARTS

In the Valentine's Day special [*Country's Cutest Couples*, Feb. 16], where's Mr. and Mrs. George Strait? George and Norma have always been in the *Country Weekly* Valentine's issue. Just because he isn't touring this year doesn't mean that he has quit country music. They have the best love story in country music.

— ANN HARRIS
Dallas

Editor's reply: *We agree, Ann, so we thought we'd give the Cowboy and his Cowgirl a little privacy out on the range this year to keep their hearts aflutter.*

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COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS

[THE BIG PICTURE]





JUST A WHISPER

With the backing play of Jack White (left) and Brendan Benson of The Raconteurs, Loretta Lynn belts out her 1955-penned song “Whispering Sea” during Jack’s concert at Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena.

the mix

ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE STARS OF COUNTRY—AND THEN SOME!

For the latest music news,
go to **COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM**

The One and Only

SHANIA TWAIN wrapped up her two-year residency show in Las Vegas, Shania: Still the One, last December. If you couldn't make it to one of the shows, you'll get the next best thing with the ABC television concert special *Shania: Still the One Live From Vegas*, airing Feb. 28 at 9 p.m. ET. *Live From Vegas* captures the whole Shania experience, from rehearsals to costume decisions and everything in between. The show features a 13-piece band, dancers, trained horses and, of course, your favorite Shania hits.

DOUBLE DIERKS

Dierks Bentley is larger than life during his performance the night before the Super Bowl.



KINKY REBA

Reba McEntire got in step with actors Steven Booth and J. Harrison Ghee, the stars of the musical *Kinky Boots*, at Nashville's Tennessee Performing Arts Center.



PRESIDENTIAL STYLE

The Oak Ridge Boys and friends gather for a visit with former President George H.W. Bush (center) and Barbara Bush.





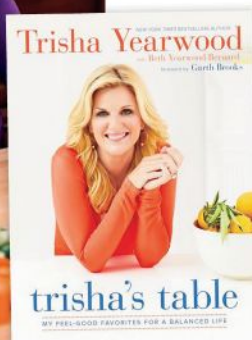
There's a New Sheriff in Town

Errol Flynn. James Garner. Henry Fonda. Burt Lancaster. Kevin Costner. Kurt Russell. And now **BLAKE SHELTON** can add his name to the esteemed list of actors who have played O.K. Corral gunslinger Wyatt Earp on-screen. Blake has reportedly signed on to play the Arizona sheriff in the Western spoof *Ridiculous 6*, the first of four original movies that Adam Sandler is producing exclusively for Netflix. Blake may have honed his acting chops by hosting *Saturday Night Live* on Jan. 24, but he'll have his hands full along co-stars Nick Nolte, Steve Buscemi, Dan Aykroyd and Luke Wilson, who are reportedly on board for the film.



Balanced Bites

TRISHA YEARWOOD looks great, doesn't she? She admits that her "diet" is more of a lifestyle change that involves making good dining choices 80 percent of the time, then splurging the other 20 percent. She's translated that philosophy into her newest cookbook, *Trisha's Table*, out March 31. Recipes include healthier items like



Angel Hair Pasta with Avocado Pesto and Billie's Houdini Chicken Salad, but also more indulgent dishes like Slow Cooker Georgia Pulled-Pork Barbecue and Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Balls.

Musical Notes

ENGAGEMENTS

ERIC PASLAY recently announced his engagement to longtime girlfriend Natalie Harker, who works for a song publishing company in Nashville. The couple has been dating for about two years and plans to marry in the spring.



TOUR NEWS

LADY ANTEBELLUM will add a Nashville stop to their Wheels Up 2015 Tour with a show at Bridgestone Arena on Sept. 11. The show will mark the trio's first concert performance at the venue.



TV TALK

THE VOICE

NBC, Mondays, 8 p.m. ET

The quest for America's finest new singer continues with Season 8, kicking off on Feb. 23.

BLAKE SHELTON returns as one of the show's coaches.

CRAIG MORGAN was recently honored for his series on the Outdoor Channel, **CRAIG MORGAN: ALL ACCESS OUTDOORS**, with a Golden Moose Award for Best Comedy. The awards are given for popular outdoors programming. **ALL ACCESS OUTDOORS**, which has completed its fifth season, profiles

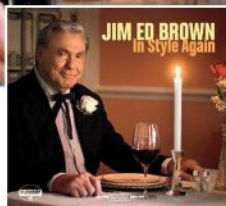
Craig's life on the stage and in some of his favorite hunting and fishing spots.





Always in Style

Grand Ole Opry legend **JIM ED BROWN** was sidelined for a little while with lung cancer, but there's really good news on that front. As of Jan. 19, doctors gave Jim Ed the all-clear. "I am in remission," he said in a statement. "There are not enough thanks for the prayers, well wishes and support I've received during the toughest time of my life. I am so grateful." He made his return to the Opry stage on Jan. 30, celebrating the release of his new album, *In Style Again*, on Plowboy Records.



IRISH EARS ARE SMILING

Last year, an Irish consortium was denied a radio license that they hoped



would establish Ireland's first full-time country radio station in Dublin. Talk about

news that's worse than a potato famine. However, the **BROADCASTING AUTHORITY OF IRELAND** has granted a temporary license from Feb. 10 to March 12 for Country FM to broadcast country music to the Emerald Isle. Get ready for the lad-country phenomenon to push bro-country right into the Atlantic.



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Luke Bryan

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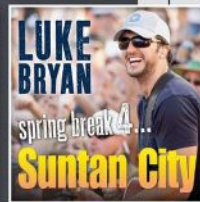
POPULATION OF
HOMETOWN
LEESBURG, GA
(2008 CENSUS)

3.95 MILLION
TWITTER FOLLOWERS

4 STUDIO
ALBUMS

10 NO. 1
SINGLES

7 **SPRING BREAK
COLLECTIONS,**
INCLUDING 2013's
COMPILATION



2 | **9**
SONS | YEARS
MARRIED
TO WIFE
CAROLINE

1968

YEAR OF THE FORD
BRONCO LUKE
HAULS ON TOUR



A promotional poster for the TV show 'The Night Shift'. The central figure is a man with a beard and dark hair, wearing blue scrubs, carrying a woman with long blonde hair in his arms. He has a serious expression. To his left, a woman with dark hair in blue scrubs looks on. Below her, a man in green scrubs and a woman in purple scrubs are visible. To the right, another woman in green scrubs and a man in red scrubs are shown. The background is a blurred hospital hallway with a sign that says 'EMERGENCY'.

No one goes down
without a fight.

THE NIGHT SHIFT

SEASON PREMIERE **MONDAY FEB 23 • 10/9c**  **NBC**
AFTER THE VOICE

A Rose by Any Other Name

The next time you pass through **NASHVILLE'S COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM**, be sure to say a special hello to 92-year-



old greeter **ROSE LEE MAPHIS** as she hands you a museum pamphlet. Rose Lee and her husband, Joe, were a successful duo in the '50s and '60s, writing and recording hits such as "Dim Lights, Thick Smoke (and Loud, Loud Music)," which artists like Conway Twitty, Marty Stuart and Dwight Yoakam have covered.



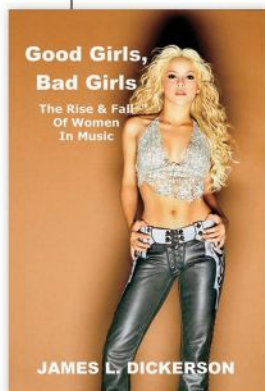
WOMEN ROCK

With all the industry buzz about the hard times female artists are facing, a new book chronicling the history of women's contributions to music is about to hit the shelves. **Good Girls,**

Bad Girls: The Rise & Fall of Women in Music, written by James L. Dickerson, provides

a 100-year history of female singers and musicians, from blues great Billie Holiday to rockers like Linda Ronstadt and country stars **FAITH HILL, SHANIA TWAIN** and **TANYA TUCKER**. The book also

profiles some of the influential women in the music business, including Frances Preston of BMI and Stax Records co-founder Estelle Axton. *Good Girls, Bad Girls* is slated to go on sale March 15.



ONLY PRETTIER

When it comes to looking good, you would think that the **ACM AWARDS** had already locked it in with handsome **BLAKE SHELTON** and **LUKE BRYAN** hosting, but it just got a little prettier with the addition of **MARY KAY** as the official beauty sponsor. This year's awards show, held at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, will be the culmination of a three-day event that includes the ACM Party for a Cause at Globe Life Park, also in Arlington. There, fans can score free product samples and learn how to find a Mary Kay consultant. Follow the pink Cadillacs!



FESTIVAL SHAKES

The festivals, like the hits, just keep on coming. And here's one for folks in Chicago, the city's first major country music festival, called the **WINDY CITY LAKE-SHAKE**. It all shakes out June 19-21 at FirstMerit Bank



Pavilion at Northerly Island, set against the majestic backdrop of Chicago's skyline. **BRAD PAISLEY**, **DIERKS BENTLEY** and **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE** are the headliners, with additional acts including **KIP MOORE**, **THOMAS RHETT**, **FRANKIE BALLARD**, **ASHLEY MONROE** and a host of

others. Check out lakeshakefestival.com for more info.

The daily lineup has also been set for the **SHAKY BOOTS MUSIC FESTIVAL** in Atlanta on May 16 and 17. May 16 performers include **BLAKE SHELTON**, **THE BAND PERRY**, **DWIGHT YOAKAM**, **DIERKS BENTLEY** and other acts. Wrapping up the festival on May 17: **BRAD PAISLEY**, **RASCAL FLATTS**, **ELI YOUNG BAND**, **SARA EVANS**, **JUSTIN MOORE** and several others. Visit shakyboots.com to make your plans.

FAST AS YOU CAN

From pickups to makeup, country stars pitch a plethora of products as television commercial spokespersons. But how many have danced with the devil to pitch the perilous powers of fast food? Well, we're glad you asked, because we found more than a few who have sold their deep-fried souls for a song and dance.



Johnny Cash
Taco Bell



Darius Rucker
Burger King



Scotty McCreery
Bojangles



Kix Brooks
Xaxby's



Lee Ann Womack
Xaxby's



STYLIN' & PROFILIN'

WHEN IT CAME TIME TO prepare for their sixth studio album, Lady Antebellum's Hillary Scott, Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley picked a handful of their favorite tunesmiths to collaborate with while they were out on tour. One of those writers happened to be the very talented and successful Shane McAnally, who is coming off a hot streak of No. 1 songs, including Sam Hunt's "Leave the Night On."

Shane was scheduled to link up with the trio in Reno, Nev., in the midst of their Take Me Downtown Tour. Before that day arrived, Shane did all he could to prepare himself to have a successful trip. "A few days before we went out, Dave sent me the track for 'Freestyle,'" Shane explains. "It didn't have a title and it didn't have words. He just said this is a fun thing that sounds like something we would do onstage. It was just a track.

I listened to it over and over, trying to get in their world of what they needed and what they wanted."

By the time he got on the plane, Shane honed in on what the track made him feel, which he says had summer all over it. "I was just trying to think of references to summer and kind of doing things as they come, because that's how the track hit me," says Shane. "I spent that time on the plane trying to think about what they

LADY ANTEBELLUM/ABC; SHANE COURTESY SNACK SONGS



“FREESTYLE”

← Performed by
Lady Antebellum

→ Written by
Dave Haywood,
Charles Kelley,
Hillary Scott,
Shane McAnally



SHANE GAME

Not only is Shane McAnally a hit songwriter, but he also has become known for his successes as a producer. Most recently, Shane's name can be found on albums such as Kacey Musgraves' award-winning *Same Trailer Different Park* and Sam Hunt's *Montevallo*. Later this year, Shane will also be lending his time and talents to the upcoming musical, *Moonshine: That Hee Haw Musical*, also featuring Brandy Clark. The show will be hitting the Dallas Theater Center in September, with intentions of next making it to Broadway.

might say onstage to their audiences through that kind of song.”

When he landed in Reno, Shane had little pieces and ideas that he felt could get them started. “The minute I shared what I had with them, they jumped in and actually started that chorus. It was like they already had it in their head. It was a three-part, perfect, beautiful harmony. I was like, ‘Wow, how do they do that?’” Shane recalls, laughing. “They can read each others’ minds, and in

that moment, it really did become a little bit of freestyling.”

Not only did the trip produce their latest hit, “Freestyle,” but also “Just a Girl,” both of which landed on Lady A’s 747 album. “Freestyle” was released as the second single, following on the success of their chart-topping “Bartender,” and quickly has mirrored that tune’s success, as it currently continues to climb *Billboard*’s Top 20.

“It was just a great trip,” says Shane.

“It’s always nerve-racking when you’re going on someone’s bus, because you’re thrown into their world. You’re in the middle of their families, their life, their routine, their band . . . you don’t want to be in anyone’s way. With Lady A, specifically, they are so warm and inviting. They make sure you’re comfortable and that you’ve got everything you need. It made it a trip that seemed so easy. It really was awesome!”

— ALANNA CONAWAY

[QUESTIONS]

Sam Hunt

Sam Hunt is one of country's hottest new arrivals, hitting No. 1 with his debut single, "Leave the Night On." His album *Montevallo* landed on numerous critics' end-of-year lists in 2014, and he'll be on stages big and small throughout 2015. We chatted with the towering former football player and found out one of his worst habits. (Hint: it involves pizza.)

— ALANNA CONAWAY

What is your must-have tour accessory?

I'm a very low-maintenance person and not very needy as far as having anything other than the obvious necessities. One thing I lose a ton of is phone chargers. I'm constantly spending money on phone chargers. I don't even know how much money I've wasted on them!

What is a word or phrase you say all the time?

"Shoot" [laughs].

Beer or wine?

I don't drink a lot, but I'm going to say beer.

What is your favorite way to work out?

Playing basketball.

What is your favorite compliment to receive?

I think praise of a song I've written from a songwriter I respect.

What is a habit you have that you would like to break?

Eating pizza on the bus after one in the morning [laughs].

What is your favorite article of clothing or accessory?

It changes, but right now I've got some new snakeskin boots, and I love them!

What is your favorite smell?

Hamburgers on the grill.

What is a current trend you wish would go away?

Let me think . . . I don't know. I'm not very easily annoyed. I never put any thought into that. I can't think of anything.

Does anything stress you out?

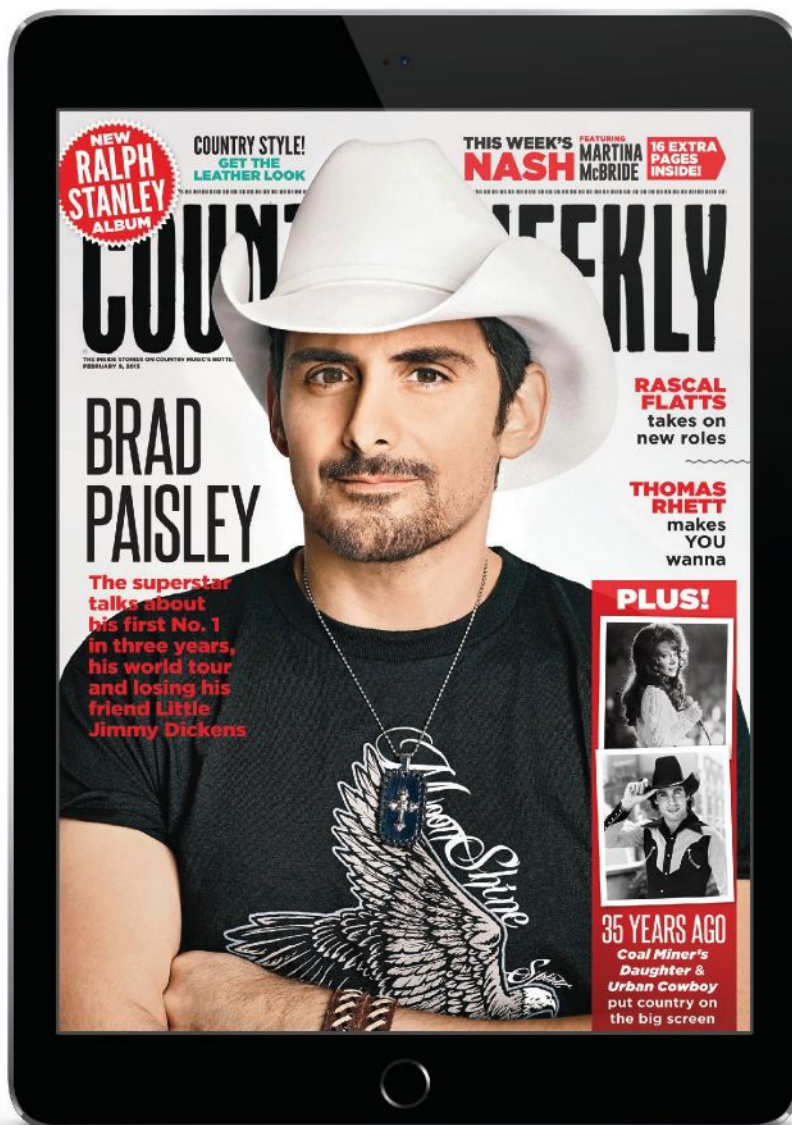
No. No matter what the circumstances, I'm—for the most part—pretty easygoing. It's tough to get me wound up about much. I guess it's from the laid-back nature of the Georgia culture. I guess that's where I get it from.

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Spring Rush

Groundhog Schmoundhog. Aren't you ready to pack up your dark colors, long pants and leggings and kick it into spring with a little (or a lot of) color? Bright hues and bold patterns were spotted on the runway during spring fashion week, and while you may not want to take some of those haute risks, **KACEY MUSGRAVES** shows us how we can make it work in small-town U.S.A. — **TAMMY RAGUSA**

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BANGLE
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BOOTS
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 \$149.99 | bootbarn.com



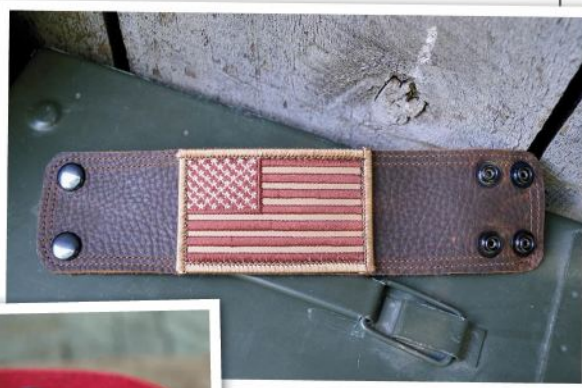


DIVA DUCK

Huge props to **JESSICA ROBERTSON**, the beautiful wife of **DUCK DYNASTY**'s Jep Robertson. Jessica has put her name on a new line of beauty products, including tanning lotions, nail polish and lip gloss. The tanning lotions and bronzers are full of natural ingredients like black walnut extract, white tea extract, shea and avocado and smell delicious, while the nail polish has great coverage and the glosses are sheer and light. Ask for them wherever you buy tanning supplies and cosmetics.

That's So Personal

We were first introduced to **ZACH RUNQUIST** and **ZNR DESIGNS** as the leatherworker behind Kristen Kelly's "Believe" line of jewelry. Since then we've discovered a true artisan who has also crafted items for Miranda Lambert, Colt Ford and others. But you don't have to be a star to have one of Zach's great pieces. Check out his store on myshopify.com or ask about custom pieces through the ZNR Facebook page.





Happy and Healthy

SHERYL CROW
SHOWS YOU THE
WAY TO GOOD
NUTRITION WITH
THIS RECIPE.

ONE GLANCE AT SHERYL CROW and you'd never guess that she turned 53 this past Feb. 11. How does she stay in such amazing shape? Part of the secret lies with her healthy, nutrition-filled diet, which she embarked on after her breast cancer diagnosis in 2006. Sheryl and chef Chuck White collected some of their favorite recipes in their cookbook, *If It Makes You Healthy: More Than 100 Delicious Recipes Inspired by the Seasons*. The title partly takes off on Sheryl's 1996 hit "If It Makes You Happy."

The book emphasizes locally grown and vitamin-rich foods. That's important for a busy artist like Sheryl, who served as one of the opening acts for George Strait on

his The Cowboy Rides Away Tour and is currently working on a new album. *If It Makes You Healthy* also features easy-to-follow food tips from Sheryl along with personal anecdotes from her life as an entertainer.

As we approach the end of American Heart Month in February, it's a good time to start on your heart-healthy diet plan. Try out this dish from Sheryl's cookbook, roasted potato salad with sweet corn and cider vinegar. In this recipe, Sheryl swaps fattening mayonnaise with olive oil and cider vinegar for a lighter touch.

You'll feel healthy—and very happy with yourself.

— BOB PAXMAN

SHERYL COURTESY WMN; POTATO SALAD BY ALISON MIKSCH/CORBIS

Sheryl Crow's Roasted Potato Salad With Sweet Corn & Cider Vinegar

MAKES 8-10 SERVINGS

Cooking spray

2½ pounds unpeeled red potatoes, diced into ½-inch cubes

1 medium red onion, thinly sliced

2 tbsp. canola oil

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1½ cups roasted fresh corn

1 cup diced celery

2 tsp. garlic powder

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup apple cider vinegar

¾ cup thinly sliced fresh basil

HEAT oven to 425° and coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.

TOSS potatoes and onion with canola oil in a bowl, **SEASON** with salt and pepper and spread evenly on baking sheet.

BAKE until crispy yet fork-tender, about 20 to 25 minutes.

COOL to room temperature and return to bowl.

ADD corn, celery and garlic

powder, then whisk olive oil and vinegar in a bowl and drizzle over potatoes and onions.

SEASON with salt and pepper. **COVER** and refrigerate at least 2 hours (up to 8 hours). **STIR** in basil before serving.

FOR ROASTED CORN:

SOAK unhusked ears of corn in water for 10 to 15 minutes.

HEAT oven to 375° and **COOK** ears in a shallow pan for 25 minutes (or until kernels are tender). Let cool.

REMOVE, discard husks and slice kernels off cob. Three ears of corn should yield about 1½ cups of kernels.



SWING VOTERS

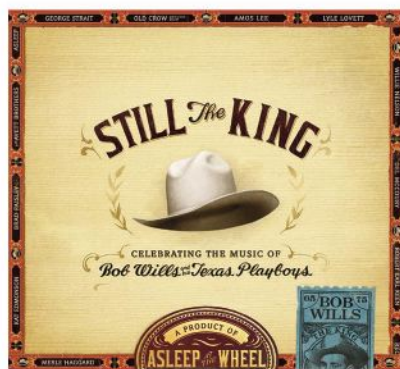
THE STARS COME OUT FOR A
NEW TRIBUTE TO THE MUSIC OF
ICONIC BANDLEADER **BOB WILLS**
FROM HARDWORKING OUTFIT
ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

Waylon Jennings may have said it best in 1974 when he said, “Bob Wills is still the king”—a sentiment that rings true more than 40 years later. So on the eve of what would have been Bob’s 100th birthday, Ray Benson and Asleep at the Wheel are releasing *Still the King: Celebrating the Music of Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys*.

The titular celebration almost started out more like a surprise party for Asleep at the Wheel leader Ray Benson. Feeling that restless creative urge, he told his son Sam—who runs the band’s studio and works for their management office—that he was ready to get back in the studio. “I told him, ‘I’m thinking about another Asleep at the Wheel record. I’m trying to figure out what to do,’” he says on a phone call from his home in Austin. “He said, ‘Well, you’ve got to do another Bob Wills tribute album.’ And I said, ‘No, we’ve done two of them,’ and he said, ‘Yeah, the last one [*Ride With Bob*] was 15 years ago.’”

That turned out to be entirely too long for Ray, who has devoted



most of his life to studying Bob and the entire Western swing subgenre. “It started out in the ‘60s when we discovered him and were like, ‘Hey, who is this guy?’ Because we didn’t grow up with Bob Wills,” he recalls. “I have thousands of CDs of all the classic Western swing, whether it’s Bob Wills or Milton Brown or a dozen other bands. And I knew all the old Playboys. I was very fortunate to meet them in the early ‘70s. And for me, I always felt for some reason, and I don’t know why, that me and Asleep at the Wheel have been a repository of a lot of this knowledge about this music and how to do it, how to play it. A lot of people are repositories for this music, but we’re the ones out there

playing it 150 days a year around the world. We have a little bit of responsibility to do it right.”

Other stars joined Asleep at the Wheel in that attempt to do it right on *Still the King*, because what celebration would be complete without guests attending the party? And the list of guests who contributed their voices to the project—which was co-produced by Ray’s son Sam—includes Willie Nelson, Brad Paisley, Jamey Johnson, Merle Haggard, George Strait, Lyle Lovett, Robert Earl Keen and Amos Lee, along with roots favorites like The Avett Brothers and Old Crow Medicine Show.





Asleep at the Wheel: Ray Benson (seated), flanked by Emily Gimble (left) and Katie Holmes; (standing, from left) David Sanger, David Miller, Eddie Rivers and Jay Reynolds

It's no surprise that Ray can't pick a favorite after working with such a talented lineup, but his friend George Strait is probably a top contender. "George could have done any song in the whole dang repertoire, but I wanted 'South of the Border (Down Mexico Way),' " says Ray. "You know, George's ranch is down in south Texas and I had seen him sing with a mariachi band. He sings in Spanish and he sounds just great." Ray hesitates, then laughs. "There are a lot of things people don't know about George."

Another favorite for Ray was "I Hear Ya Talkin'," which was recorded with Amos Lee. "I don't think that

was ever even recorded by Bob Wills," reflects Ray. "It was on a video he did—they called them 'shorts' back then, movie shorts. It might have been on a radio broadcast, but it was just cool. It has all the elements of Western swing that we love, then you get Amos to sing it because he's just such a great singer."

For some artists, the opportunity to take part in the project offered an extension to their country music education. Ray and his son, who were naturally thrilled to have Jamey Johnson involved, learned that the traditional-leaning artist wasn't as experienced performing Western swing. "He knew who Bob

Wills was, he knew the importance of him, but he had never really played the music," recalls Ray. Jamey entered the studio to record "Brain Cloudy Blues" with some very simple advice from Ray: "Just sing. You'll get it."

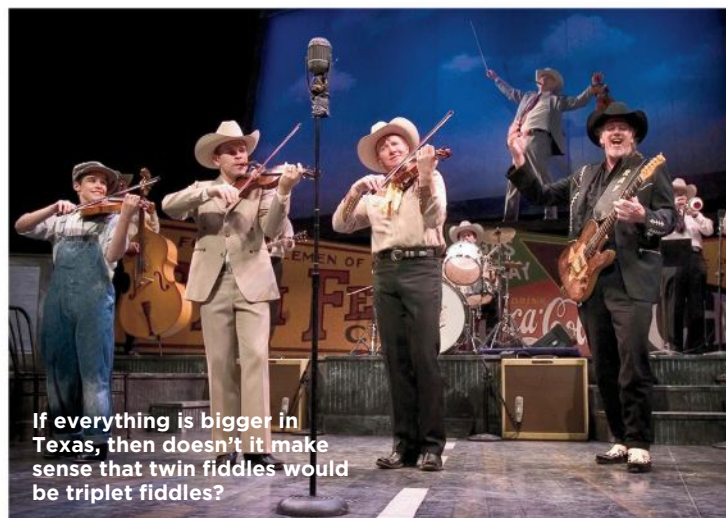
For popular string band Old Crow Medicine Show, it was a chance to acknowledge the rich history of an icon. "'Tiger Rag,' the track that we worked on, was a song that really exposes Bob Wills' deep reverence for black music. Specifically for New Orleans jazz," says Old Crow's Ketch Secor. "One of the things that made [Bob] such a great performer and such an important musical



At 6 feet 7 inches, he's an imposing figure, but Ray is a gentle and extremely talented giant.



Introducing the newest member of the Wheel—Katie Holmes



If everything is bigger in Texas, then doesn't it make sense that twin fiddles would be triplet fiddles?

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL CONT. mind was that he really stood at the crossroads where white and black came together. Jazz and country are the two main ingredients that make up Western swing. So Bob is more than the King of Western Swing, he's also an American musical original and a real pioneer, much like Elvis."

In retrospect, one of the album's most magical moments was captured with The Time Jumpers' cover of "Faded Love." It marks one of the last times the band's Dawn Sears lent her angelic vocals to a recording. "Dawn sang the bridge on it and just tore it up," remembers Ray. "We have it all on film and it is certainly very touching. You never would have

known she was in the final year of her life. And her husband, Kenny, played on it and we were really glad we were able to do that and thank Vince Gill for getting it all together."

As Ray indicates, the studio work was all filmed and the plan is to turn the footage into another element of Asleep at the Wheel's longtime dedication to Western swing. Beyond that, an animated piece from Ray's other son, Aaron, that will showcase Old Crow's "Tiger Rag" is expected soon. There are also appearances scheduled on *Austin City Limits* by The Avett Brothers and Amos Lee, as well as on the continuing television series *The Texas Music Scene*, hosted by Ray, that will spotlight Robert Earl

Keen and the Quebe Sisters' contributions to the project. And because no one ever made it in music by dreaming small, Ray is even gunning for a Bob Wills movie.

In the end, 22 tracks were recorded for *Still the King* and, according to Ray, they had deadlines to meet. "We could have done about 12 more cuts, but we didn't have time," he says, before dropping a hint about something to anticipate in the future. "Kacey Musgraves was supposed to do it, but I had to tell her, 'Next time, darlin', we'll have to do it next time.'"

And even if next time for Asleep at the Wheel is another 15 years away, Bob Wills will still almost certainly be the king. **CW**

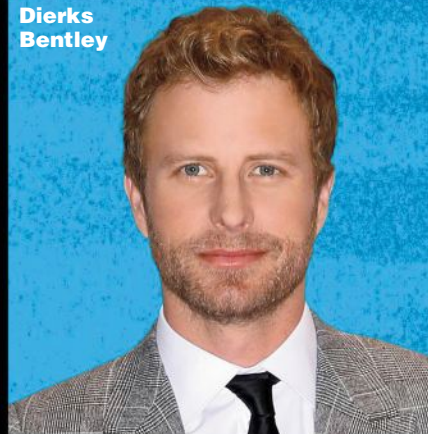
NASH

MAGAZINE

Miranda
Lambert



Dierks
Bentley



Blake
Shelton



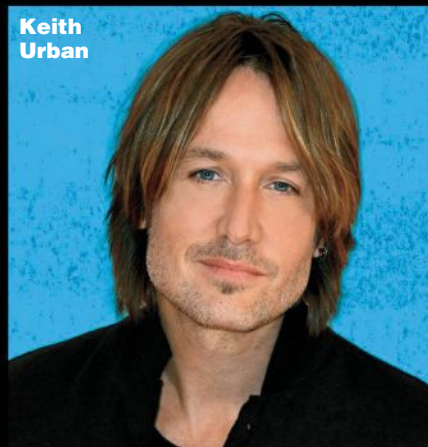
Brandy
Clark



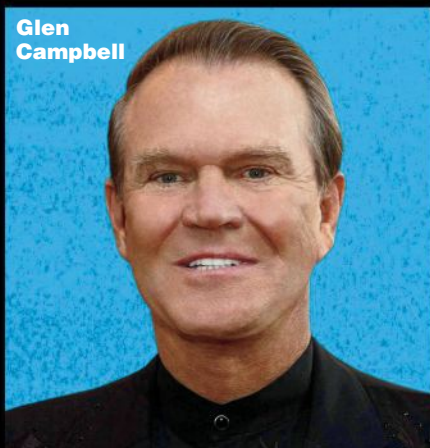
Lee
Brice



Keith
Urban



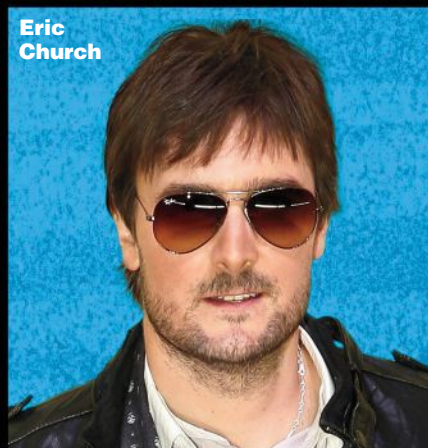
Glen
Campbell



Kacey
Musgraves




Eric
Church



THE AWARD GOES TO

**NASH CHARTS
THE CHANGES AND
LOOKS FOR
SURPRISES AT
THE ACADEMY
OF COUNTRY
MUSIC AWARDS**

A full-page photograph of country music artist Justin Moore. He is standing in a barn, wearing a white cowboy hat with a black band, a dark blue denim shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and blue jeans. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a rustic wooden barn interior.

Ladies' Man

FROM HIS HOME
LIFE TO HIS TOURING
SCHEDULE,
JUSTIN MOORE
IS A HAPPY MAN
AMONG WOMEN.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

JUSTIN BY KRIETIN BARLOWE/BMLG; FAMILY COURTESY THE MOORE FAMILY/BMLG

Justin Moore is one of the most genuine, talented and funny guys in country music. He's also one of the most chill.

And while that could be a good bit of laid-back DNA with a side of small-town Arkansas rearing, you can't discount the effect that sharing a home with his wife and three daughters has on Justin's ability to go with the flow.

Now, Justin, 30, is in the midst of Miranda Lambert's Certified Platinum Tour, where he finds himself on the road with all women. "I'm thinking that I drew the short straw," says Justin, as he kicks back in his chair with a wide smile on his face—all the evidence we need to know that he truly is joking.

"I didn't grow up around women, other than my mom and grandmas and aunts, but I love it," he confesses. "I think it's made me a better person living with them. It's made me a more patient person, probably a more understanding person because you're not getting

anywhere fast. And you have to realize that drama comes with the territory, at least with the ones I live with. I'm not going to generalize and say all women are dramatic, but a couple of the ones I live with are. But I think it's made me appreciate that everybody has their own personality, everybody handles things differently, what's a big deal to me may not be to you and vice versa. I think it's made me aware of those things."

Don't let his comments about having patience or living with drama fool you. Justin would be the first to admit that he is smitten with wife Kate and very tightly wound around the fingers of daughters Ella, 5, Kennedy, 3, and baby Klein, who hasn't yet hit the 1-year mark. In fact, he typically takes one daughter at a time on the tour bus with him. "This past weekend, Kennedy wanted to go bad. She was breaking my heart. I was taking Ella out and Kennedy was packing her bag, too. She was going with Dad. My wife was saying, 'Stay with me! I'll buy

you a puppy, I'll buy you a goldfish, I'll buy you a horse,' and she said, 'No, I'm going with Dad.' I would have taken them both, and during the day it would have been totally fine. I don't mind pushing one off to the side with one of the guys that works for me. One of them. But I hate to go, 'Hey, will you watch my kids while I work?' Fortunately, what sold her on staying with her mom was—her mom, after promising all those things—a cup of hot chocolate." He smiles and adds, "We have to work on her bartering skills."

On second thought, being on the road with Miranda Lambert, RaeLynn and an array of other ingénues on the tour may be a bit of a break for Justin, who has headlined his own arena tour. "Miranda and I are really good friends," he explains, "genuinely friends and would be with or without this business. And she is one of the few I would go out on the road and tour with as an opening act. We had success last year doing our own arena tour and I

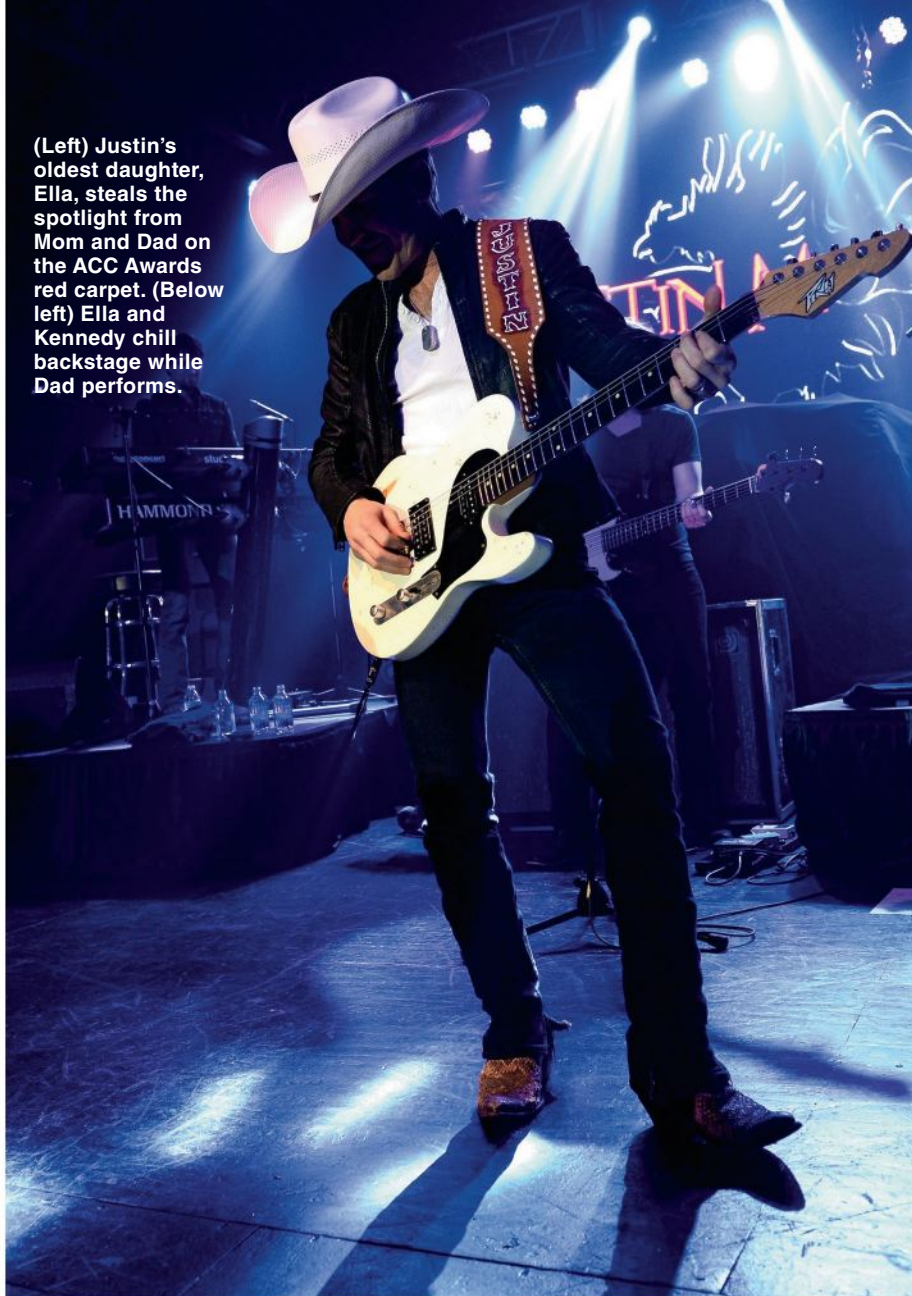


Justin with his lovely ladies: (from left) Kennedy, Ella, wife Kate and, swaddled in the front, baby Klein

JUSTIN MOORE CONT.



(Left) Justin's oldest daughter, Ella, steals the spotlight from Mom and Dad on the ACC Awards red carpet. (Below left) Ella and Kennedy chill backstage while Dad performs.



really was kind of gearing up to do that again, and she asked and I thought, you know what, if there was anybody out there I would go back out with, with the exception of a few others, it would probably be her."

His own tours haven't utilized his ability to navigate the tricky minds of women, but it wasn't because he had enough of big hair and high heels. "We've taken out all guys on the two we've done and that's not by design," he says, almost surprised himself. "It's not that I wouldn't take out a girl. When we were looking, there were no girls available that fit what we wanted to do out there. I would definitely take out a girl if I liked their music and respected

them as an artist and an individual."

With Ella and Kennedy frequently exposed to not just their dad's music, but that of one of the hottest females in country music, could a mini-Moore one day be on the road with Daddy? "They're always playing shows for us at the house, or singing and dancing," he says, smiling. "I don't know if that's typical of every 3- and 5-year-old—it probably is—or if it's because of me or not. I will say that Ella, from all that I've heard, all the children I've heard, she's a pretty exceptional singer. It's kind of scary how good she can sing." And while he isn't planning on encouraging any music business aspirations, he also says that he and Kate won't discour-

age it. "I think no matter what business you're in, you don't want your children in that business because you know the ins, but more importantly, you know the outs. It wouldn't matter if I was a doctor, lawyer, whatever. Obviously if she chooses, down the road, to do that, we'll be supportive of her," he says.

Spending a few minutes with Justin feels more like hanging out with an old friend than interviewing a successful country singer. "That's part of our success, I think," he says. "I hopefully am approachable and people feel like we're friends, because I consider you guys friends. It takes a ton of people to help you become successful in something like this. It's everybody." ■

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FIFTY



CHARTING THE CHANGES FOR THE ACM AWARDS' GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY.

When the Academy of Country Music Awards takes over Dallas for the week in late April, the long-running program will mark its first 50 years with a show as big as Texas and the supersized AT&T Stadium where it will be held.

While details about the April 19 show and its performers (aside from co-hosts Blake Shelton and Luke Bryan) are scant at press time, it's probably safe to guess that attendees and viewers at home will get a nice nostalgic look back as well as maybe some grand attempt to figure out where all this is headed. Because, goodness knows, some things have changed.

At that first ACM Awards, Bakersfield Sound pioneer Buck Owens and his wife, Bonnie Owens, took home the

Top Male and Top Female Vocalist awards. Roger Miller was the man of the hour, and the Entertainer of the Year honor didn't exist. That started in 1970, with Merle Haggard bringing home the first one.

Over the next 50 years, myriad stylistic shifts in country would be reflected in the ACMs' top categories. Some years were more traditional, as during the '90s boom days, while others—like 2005—reflected a broad-reaching pop sensibility. Those differences are as vast as the distance between Keith Urban and George Strait, with every artist holding firm to some notion of how he or she (or they) arrived at their expression of country music.

In 2015, we have some strange amalgam of those previous 50 years and the modern influences of MTV and the

Internet. More traditional types like Brad Paisley are pitted against rule-breakers like Jason Aldean in the Male Vocalist of the Year category, while the Female Vocalist group leans more toward classic songwriters like Brandy Clark, Kacey Musgraves and Miranda Lambert. Still, as always, the past is with us: Garth Brooks nabbed an Entertainer of the Year nomination along with newly minted stars like Luke Bryan, Miranda Lambert, Florida Georgia Line and Jason Aldean.

If we had to hazard a guess at the next 10 years of the ACM Awards, maybe this is a good clue. New trends will undoubtedly have emerged in that time—some of them even more controversial than bro-country—but traces will remain to remind us where we've been. — **JON FREEMAN**

50TH ANNUAL ACM AWARDS NOMINEES

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

JASON ALDEAN
GARTH BROOKS
LUKE BRYAN
MIRANDA LAMBERT
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

2014 WINNER:
GEORGE STRAIT

With Taylor Swift moving to pop and George Strait riding away, the door is wide open in a category that was too crowded for Blake Shelton and Eric Church.



MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

JASON ALDEAN
DIERKS BENTLEY
LUKE BRYAN
ERIC CHURCH
BRAD PAISLEY
BLAKE SHELTON

2014 WINNER:
JASON ALDEAN

Jason looks for this third consecutive win in this category, which hasn't been done since Brad Paisley won five in a row from 2007 to 2011.



FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

BRANDY CLARK
MIRANDA LAMBERT
MARTINA McBRIDE
KACEY MUSGRAVES
CARRIE UNDERWOOD



2014 WINNER: MIRANDA LAMBERT

Reba McEntire won this trophy seven times . . .
Miranda goes for her sixth (in a row) this year.

VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR

LADY ANTEBELLUM
LITTLE BIG TOWN
RASCAL FLATTS
THE BAND PERRY
ZAC BROWN BAND

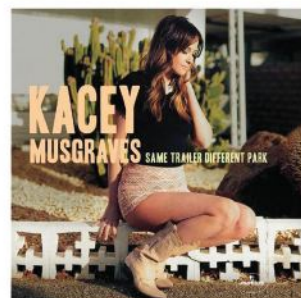


2014 WINNER: THE BAND PERRY

Zac Brown Band is the only nominee that hasn't won this award in the past.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT
JASON ALDEAN
PAIN KILLER
LITTLE BIG TOWN
PLATINUM
MIRANDA LAMBERT
RISER
DIERKS BENTLEY
THE OUTSIDERS
ERIC CHURCH



2014 WINNER:
SAME TRAILER
DIFFERENT PARK
KACEY MUSGRAVES

Eric Church (1) and Miranda Lambert (3), combined, have won this award four times.

VOCAL DUO OF THE YEAR

BROTHERS OSBORNE
DAN + SHAY
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
MADDIE & TAE
THE SWON BROTHERS

2014 WINNER:
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE



Maddie & Tae were snubbed in the Single, Song and Video of the Year categories, but picked up their first career ACM nomination as a Vocal Duo.

SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR

"AMERICAN KIDS"
KENNY CHESNEY

"AUTOMATIC"
MIRANDA LAMBERT

"DIRT"
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

"DRUNK ON A PLANE"
DIERKS BENTLEY

"I DON'T DANCE"
LEE BRICE

2014 WINNER:
"MAMA'S BROKEN HEART"
MIRANDA LAMBERT

Lee Brice's "I Don't Dance" was voted the top single of 2014 by the CW staff.

SONG OF THE YEAR (SONGWRITERS)

"AMERICAN KIDS"
RODNEY CLAWSON,
LUKE LAIRD, SHANE McANALLY

"AUTOMATIC" NICOLLE GALYON,
NATALIE HEMBY, MIRANDA LAMBERT

"DRINK A BEER"
JIM BEAVERS, CHRIS STAPLETON

"FOLLOW YOUR ARROW"
BRANDY CLARK, SHANE McANALLY,
KACEY MUSGRAVES

"GIVE ME BACK MY HOMETOWN"
ERIC CHURCH, LUKE LAIRD

"I HOLD ON"
DIERKS BENTLEY, BRETT JAMES

2014 WINNER:
LEE BRICE'S
"I DRIVE YOUR
TRUCK,"
JESSI
ALEXANDER,
CONNIE
HARRINGTON,
JIMMY YEARY

In addition to their collaboration on "American Kids," Shane McAnally and Luke Laird were each nominated a second time.



VIDEO OF THE YEAR

"AMERICAN KIDS"
KENNY CHESNEY

"COP CAR"
KEITH URBAN

"DRUNK ON A PLANE"
DIERKS BENTLEY

"I'M NOT GONNA MISS YOU"
GLEN CAMPBELL

"SOMETHIN' BAD"
MIRANDA LAMBERT
WITH CARRIE UNDERWOOD

2014 WINNER: "HIGHWAY DON'T CARE," TIM McGRAW
FEATURING TAYLOR SWIFT AND KEITH URBAN



This is Glen Campbell's first nomination since 1975, when he was up for five awards and took home two for Single and Song of the Year for "Rhinestone Cowboy."

VOCAL EVENT OF THE YEAR

"LONELY TONIGHT"
BLAKE SHELTON FEATURING
ASHLEY MONROE

"MEANWHILE BACK AT MAMA'S" TIM McGRAW
FEATURING FAITH HILL

"SOMETHIN' BAD"
MIRANDA LAMBERT WITH
CARRIE UNDERWOOD

"THE SOUTH"
THE CADILLAC THREE FEATURING FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE,
DIERKS BENTLEY AND MIKE ELI

"THIS IS HOW WE ROLL"
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE FEATURING LUKE BRYAN

2014 WINNER:
"WE WERE US"
KEITH URBAN
FEATURING
MIRANDA
LAMBERT

Florida Georgia Line picked up two nominations, following in the footsteps of Brad Paisley, who was nominated twice in 2012 for "Remind Me" and "Old Alabama."



NASH | *WHAT the TRUCK?*



Josh Thompson

WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE, JOSH THOMPSON SHOWS US THE INS AND OUTS OF HIS 2014 CHEVY SILVERADO.

PHOTOS BY TYLER ANDREWS



2014 CHEVY SILVERADO



sistmgr@eq-



There's no maid service in Josh's 2014 Chevy Silverado, so don't be surprised if you find everything from a guitar and a teddy bear to birdseed and camo in the cab . . . and a little bit of mud on the inside and outside.



There's something to be said about the connection a guy has with his truck. In **JOSH THOMPSON**'s case, his truck is his lifeline to everything that occurs in his day-to-day life. "I live in my truck, really," Josh, 37, tells **NASH**. "It's got everything I need to survive in it, and that's what makes it so special."

And that also means you never know what to find on any given day. "One time I was cleaning out my truck, and I came across a Green Bay Packers toaster," he says, laughing.

Today, there's no toaster to be found, but that doesn't mean he isn't toting around a bunch of other intriguing items, including a deer wall-mount from a recent hunting trip. "Now, that was an

accident," Josh clarifies with a hearty laugh. "I didn't mean to have that in the truck still. I just got back from hunting in Mississippi with some of my friends over the weekend, and got that. I haven't taken it out of the truck yet."

Josh also puts his truck's toolbox to good use, always keeping it filled with just about anything you can think of, from his favorite pair of Tony Lama boots to his Carhartt overalls, and of course, plenty of tools. "You never know when you're going to need random things throughout the course of time," he says.

The cab of the truck can tell a story by itself. His daughter's car seat and his guitar are carefully placed in the backseat among plenty of camou-

flagged items, including his backpack, sunglasses, ball caps and coffee cups.

"Nothing in the truck is staged," shares Josh as he points out a large bag of birdseed laying on the floor of the backseat. "I feed birds, I can't help it. I'm an old man."

Since making his mark in country music with hits "Way Out Here," "Beer on the Table" and "Cold Beer With Your Name on It," Josh has become rather fond of Chevy trucks.

"Carl Black Chevrolet has been so good to me over the years," says Josh. "I love my truck. It's a reflection of me in many ways. I am proud to take it everywhere I go."

— **ALANNA CONAWAY**



Chase Bryant heats up the studio, while Chase Rice (right) is as cool as a cucumber.



The Chase Is On!

TWO OF COUNTRY'S HOTTEST NEW ARTISTS HAVE THE SAME NAME, BUT AS SHAWN FINDS OUT—THEY ARE NOTHING ALIKE.

“Chase” is a word I hear pretty frequently these days. As a little-known fact, I have been the voice for a Game Show Network program called *The Chase* for four seasons. But what makes the word relevant today is the fact that I’ve had two Chase encounters in the *Nash Nights Live* studio recently.

When Chase Bryant stopped by to chat, I knew from the first notes he played on his guitar that he was a force to be reckoned with. As his single “Take It On Back” moves through the Top 10, Chase is starting 2015 by headlining his own tour before heading out with Tim

McGraw in the spring. Since Chase was a kid, all he wanted to do was play music, and that’s exactly what he has done. With his guitar finesse, producing skills and ear for music, I believe he is on the fast track to superstardom.

Then when I sat down with Chase Rice, he had a lot to tell me. This guy went from University of North Carolina football to being part of a NASCAR pit crew, from competing on *Survivor* to co-writing one of the biggest country songs ever, “Cruise” for Florida Georgia Line. As a recording artist, Chase found success with “Ready Set Roll” and spent much of 2014 on the

road. But years of touring hard have taken their toll on Chase’s voice.

After years of abusing his vocal chords and trying to follow doctor-ordered vocal rest, Chase had to have surgery. Now he treats his voice differently. With therapy and coaching, Chase is learning to sing the right way. It’s a good thing, too, because Chase’s new single, “Gonna Wanna Tonight,” is already climbing the charts and he will be heading out with Kenny Chesney’s Big Revival Tour this year. He will need everything he’s got to reach those audiences.

Whichever Chase you decide to follow (or if you decide to follow both), you should be in for an exciting year.



Shawn Parr, a nationally recognized disc jockey and television announcer, is host of **NASH NIGHTS LIVE WITH SHAWN PARR**, airing nightly from 7 p.m. to midnight/ET.



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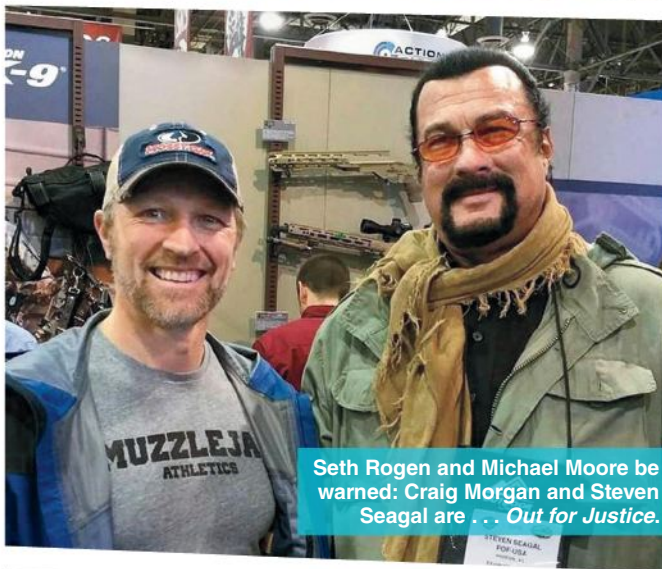
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OUT AND ABOUT WITH YOUR FAVORITE STARS!



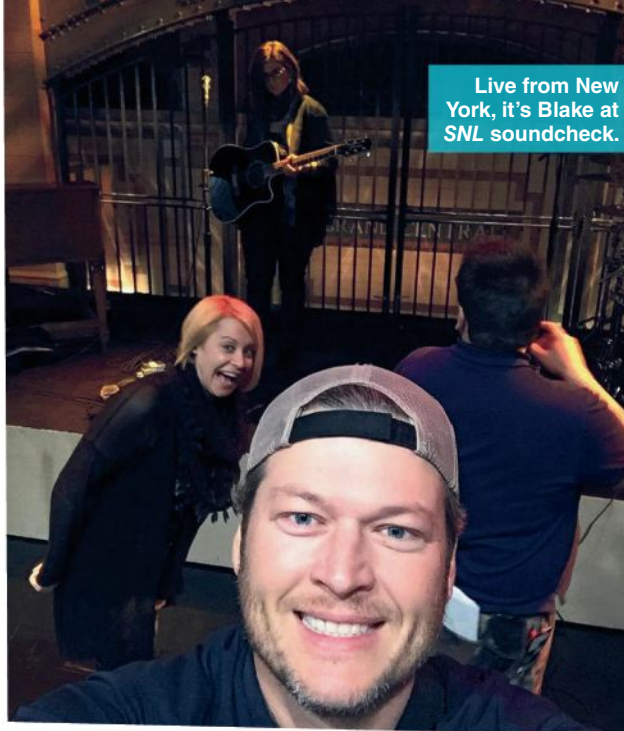
Someday the mountain might get Parmalee, but the law never will.



Seth Rogen and Michael Moore be warned: Craig Morgan and Steven Seagal are . . . Out for Justice.



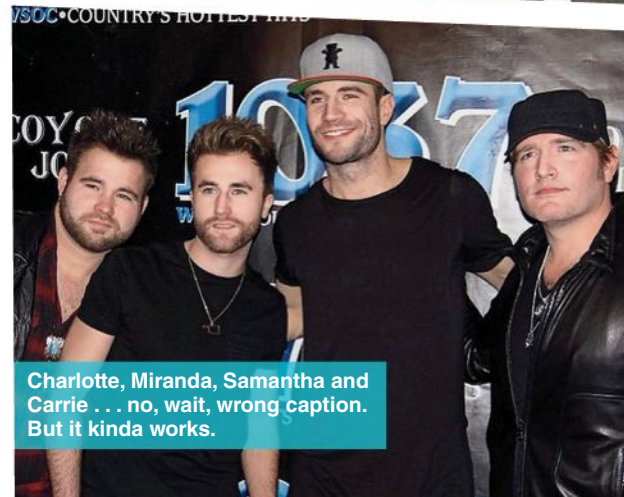
Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?



Live from New York, it's Blake at SNL soundcheck.



FGL and Jason Aldean are secretly meeting on a dirt road under the moonlight with a bottle of whiskey next to a tailgate to figure out how to take the news that Maddie & Tae's debut song went to No. 1.



Charlotte, Miranda, Samantha and Carrie . . . no, wait, wrong caption. But it kinda works.

ZACH/COLTON/SAM/JERROD COURTESY JERROD NIEMANN INSTAGRAM; CRAIG & STEVEN COURTESY CRAIGMORGANFACEBOOK; M&T COURTESY MADDIE & TAE INSTAGRAM; BLAKE COURTESY 'SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE' FACEBOOK; THE DUKES COURTESY PARMALEE INSTAGRAM; GLAHN SHOT COURTESY KAELENN INSTAGRAM



Darius Rucker



Hunter Hayes



Brantley Gilbert

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NASH | SOUND BITES

WHAT YOUR FAVORITE STARS ARE SAYING ON NASH-FM

I'm usually not the kind of person to go home and sit . . . OK, yeah I am, I'm a nerd. I will totally sit down until I beat a video game, I'm nerdy about that.

CHRIS YOUNG

I come prepared. I write a lot on the road by myself so when I do have my co-writers I can have like a bunch [of ideas].

JON PARDI

I can't see anything beyond this moment right now. I am so bad at booking anything, so I just double book. I don't know if that's years of Jäger bombs.

DIERKS BENTLEY

There are so many great entertainers but right now it seems like Luke Bryan is on top of the world. He's a buddy but also on top of the world.

LEE BRICE

on Luke Bryan's career

I've been out all year with Jason Aldean and Florida Georgia Line on the Burn It Down Tour and [Jason's] actually doing a song on the new album with me, so we'll have a collaboration on there.

TYLER FARR

At this point in my career, I've been fortunate to have enough success [that] we could go out and play arenas on our own and do our own shows, and we've done so. We did so last year.

JUSTIN MOORE

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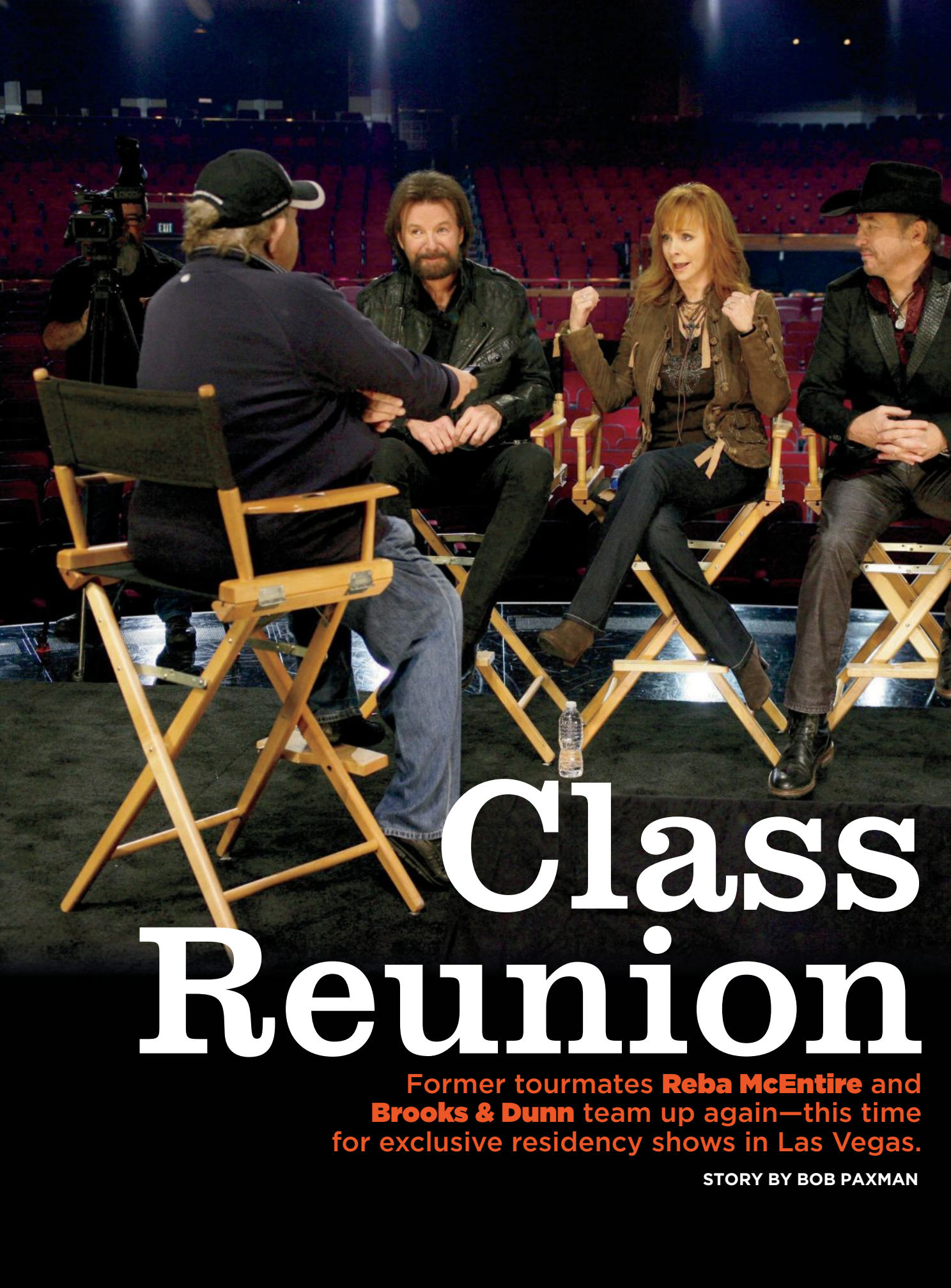
An ice cream sundae is the perfect cherry on top of your visit.



ELLISTON PLACE SODA SHOP

In the days of yore, soda shops weren't just a popular teen hangout, they were also a place for families to enjoy a treat. They've mostly become a thing of the past as fast-food establishments dot the city's landscape, but Nashville is proud to claim Elliston Place Soda Shop as its own. Originally opened as a grocery, the spot became a pharmacy—the tiled entry still exists—then was redesigned and opened as a soda shop in 1939. Enter under the neon sign and you'll find that red swivel stools line the counter on one side, where you can watch servers hand-dip ice cream for shakes, floats, and apple pie à la mode, while booths with upholstered banquettes line the opposite wall. But it isn't just the nostalgia of the shop that brings folks back time after time. Elliston Place serves up big breakfasts (they even call them The Big Breakfasts) in the morning and hearty meat-and-threes for lunch. Southern favorites like pimento cheese—get it on your burger—and fried green tomatoes highlight the menu, and their Nashville Party Platter is as country as it comes, with fried bologna, pimento cheese and Ritz crackers. Save room for dessert! Shakes, malts, freezes, floats, sodas, sundaes and even egg creams are available, along with homemade pies boasting mile-high meringues. Warning: wear stretchy pants.

— TAMMY RAGUSA



Class Reunion

Former tourmates **Reba McEntire** and **Brooks & Dunn** team up again—this time for exclusive residency shows in Las Vegas.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

In Las Vegas, the house usually wins. And in the case of the upcoming pairing of Reba McEntire with Brooks & Dunn, Caesars Palace is the venue that's coming up aces. The two superstar acts are taking their combined show to The Colosseum at Caesars Palace for a series of residency performances, billed as Reba, Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas, beginning June 17.

It's a reuniting of two acts that have been unified, in one way or another, since around 1992. At that time, the still-emerging duo of Brooks & Dunn, made up of Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn, served as the opening act for Reba, an artist at the top of her game with multiple Country Music Association awards and 16 No. 1 hits. Reba and Brooks & Dunn teamed up again for an extensive tour that ran, in various intervals, from 1997 to 1999. Plus, their 1998 vocal collaboration, "If You See Him/If You See Her," topped the charts for two weeks.

Offstage, the three amigos and their spouses socialize with one another on just about a weekly basis. They go out to dinner, throw house parties, attend concerts and take joint vacations together. As Kix tells it, contempt is not bred of all this familiarity. In fact, the opposite seems true.

"We all have kind of a dinner club," says Kix. The club usually revolves around concerts at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, as Reba and her husband/manager, Narvel

Blackstock, own one of the venue's private suites, where they entertain guests and business associates. "Pretty much every concert that comes to town, Reba and Narvel invite me and my wife [Barbara] and Ronnie and his wife [Janine] and maybe some other couples to go and see those concerts," Kix continues. "I think we've seen everybody from Blake Shelton to Jack White and Paul McCartney. We generally have dinner somewhere before all those shows."

DINNER CONVERSATION

One particular group outing last year sparked the proposal for the Reba/Brooks & Dunn concert pairing. Reba remembers that wheels began to turn in earnest during a pre-concert dinner at Nashville's Kayne Prime restaurant, in the city's trendy Gulch district.

"We were about to go to a concert and there were about 12 of us in the room at the restaurant," Reba recalls. "And somebody brought it up that 'you guys,' meaning myself and Kix and Ronnie, need to go back on tour together." Reba took the temperature of the room, so to speak, and quickly diagnosed that Kix and Ronnie would be eager to jump on board, as she was.

Kix's memory is equally vivid. "We were reminiscing about the tours we've done in the past," Kix says. "We did two big tours with Reba and one of them was maybe the biggest concert production that had



Reba and Brooks & Dunn have a long history of working together, including a huge tour in the late '90s.



REBA & BROOKS & DUNN CONT.

ever been done in country at the time. We had like 21 semis and 19 buses on that run. And I think it was Narvel who said would we ever consider doing that again." With a brief, wry laugh, Kix adds, "I think the consensus was that none of us were in the mood to round up 21 semis again. But we agreed that it would be fun to do a residency in Vegas. That would be a great way for all of us to hang out."

"Our managers discussed all the options," Ronnie notes. "They were out there shaking the bushes and they made it happen. They came back with a nice offer from Caesars Palace,

so we were like, 'Let's do it.' It's going to be a lot of fun to be back with Reba again. She's like a sister to us."

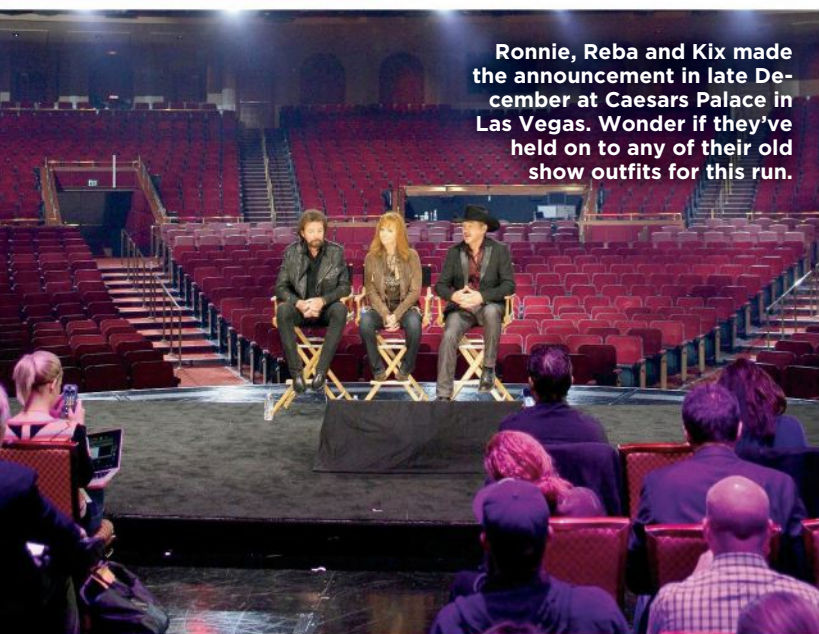
DAYS OF OLD

And there were times on past tours when Reba got the sister treatment from Kix and Ronnie. The duo was renowned for pulling pranks on their tourmates that were either inspired or sinister, depending on the victim's point of view. Kix remembers pulling the Queen Mother of all practical jokes on an unsuspecting Reba.

"I think it was on the second tour," Kix begins after a robust laugh. "Reba had a bit where she would get in a road case [backstage] and go around

and come up in the middle of the audience for her encore. We put a stink bomb in that road case, but it wasn't your ordinary goofball stink bomb. This one would just hit your gag reflex. Well, that thing went off," Kix adds, laughing again. "And I'll just tell you that it was a long couple of days for me and Ronnie after that happened. It took her that long to get over it, but in the end, she got a good laugh out of it."

Kix will quickly confide that Reba was somewhat of a merry prankster herself. In fact, by Kix's account, Reba could have placed first in a celebrity pie-throwing contest. "On our second tour," he says, "we had a tunnel to get out from under the stage.



Ronnie, Reba and Kix made the announcement in late December at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Wonder if they've held on to any of their old show outfits for this run.

And on one stop on the tour, I think it was before the show, I was just kind of lollygagging around in that tunnel and not paying attention. And she just waylaid me with a pie! She almost knocked me down, she hit me so hard with it."

PLAY THE HITS

All three are likely working on new gags for the upcoming Caesars Palace residency. They're definitely putting together ideas for the actual show, and plans appear to be taking shape.

The agreed-upon concept boils down to the two acts sharing the stage as much as possible. "This show will be a lot different," Ronnie notes. "We're

not going to come out and do a Brooks & Dunn show and then Reba comes out and does a Reba show. We're going to intermingle performances all the way through. For the most part, we're going to do it that way. We're still talking with one another about how it's all going to work."

Kix adds, "We're right in the middle of all the logistics. Ronnie and I are figuring out the songs that might make good transitions. And we're really trying to figure out how to do a show where we really participate in each other's music."

And when Kix mentions "logistics," he means more than just the material. There are staging issues, dialogue,

song intros and other requirements to be met, aspects that the general public doesn't always consider. As Reba says, "We have the songs that we like. We're working on the staging and the entrance and how we get off the stage. All those things like that, which don't seem that big, are really important."

One thing for certain—fans will be treated to a "play the hits" show format. This won't be the venue to try out unfamiliar tunes.

"That's how I'm understanding it," Ronnie says. "We want to work in as many hits as possible, whether it's 'Neon Moon' or 'Boot Scootin' Boogie' or 'My Maria.' We have put the initial set list together, but haven't made the

THE DATES

The super-show, Reba, Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas, was first slated to kick off June 24. But early ticket demand forced a Plan B, changing the start date to a week earlier than originally planned.

Here's the up-to-the-minute schedule for Reba, Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas. All shows are held at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Start making those travel plans now.

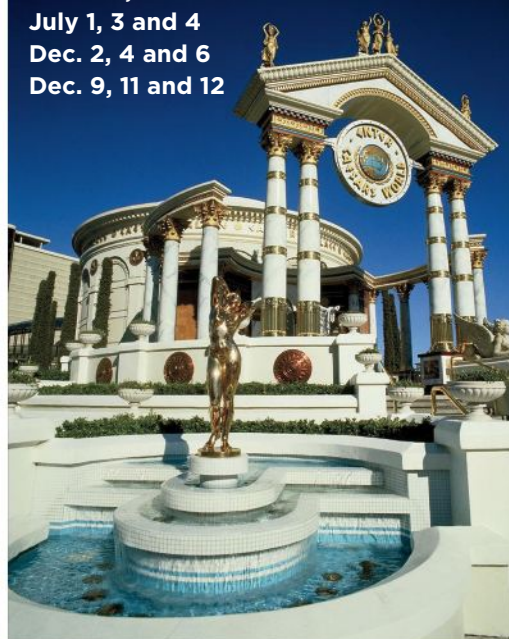
June 17, 19 and 20

June 24, 26 and 27

July 1, 3 and 4

Dec. 2, 4 and 6

Dec. 9, 11 and 12



Together Again?

Ronnie Dunn knows that the question is inevitable—are Brooks & Dunn getting back together? Well, you'll have to play a game of semantics for the answer.

Yes, Kix Brooks and Ronnie Dunn are reuniting for their Las Vegas residency shows with Reba McEntire. But it's not a full-time "reunion," as such. The pairing appears to be essentially a one-off for the Las Vegas stint.

Ronnie affirms the notion. "There is no Brooks & Dunn reunion," he says with unflinching clarity. "It is specific to this [Las Vegas] package only. I have a solo artist deal with Nash Icon Music and Kix is doing his deal with the radio show and other things. There are no plans for a [full] reunion. There's nothing on the radar."

Kix acknowledges that his plate is certainly full enough. He hosts the weekly *American Country Countdown* radio show on NASH-FM, tends to business interests with his Arrington Vineyards winery outside Nashville and continues to write songs. "I started as a songwriter and I think I'll always be one," Kix says. "There are a lot of things lined up right now and I think we're both having fun doing solo stuff."



Back in 2009, Brooks & Dunn and Reba gave the crowd at CMA Music Festival a special memory to take home. (Left) Kix and Ronnie got their stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2008.

REBA & BROOKS & DUNN CONT. final decision. I think we have the freedom to do what we want to. We can try anything. But I'm thinking that we're going to stick to the hits."

Kix agrees, "We really don't want to disappoint the people who show up in Vegas to see us. Our mission is to do the hits, the songs they've been asking for."

Fans will hear those hits in an intimate, state-of-the-art setting with impeccable sound. Caesars Palace, the go-to spot for live entertainment

in Vegas, has hosted residency shows featuring Shania Twain, Rod Stewart, Celine Dion and other artists, giving it the necessary cred.

"I love the room," Reba raves. "I have seen Shania's show there and Celine Dion twice, and I saw Bette Midler's Christmas show there one year. So I know the place pretty well. It's 4,200 seats, so it's not huge. But it's not a small theater either. It's just the perfect size. And there's not a bad seat in the house."

The intimate setting might pre-

clude any elaborate stage props. But there is a nice tradeoff. "I don't know that we'll have steer heads or bubble-blowing goats on the stage," Ronnie says, laughing. "But this is the perfect opportunity for us to really be able to communicate with the audience. Sometimes, I like to stop and maybe tell a story about one of our songs, but you can't always do that in a big arena. I've been doing that in my solo shows and it's such a different experience. I think fans really enjoy that. It's a great way to establish a rapport."

REBA BY MIKE STRASINGER/ADMEDIA/CORBIS; BROOKS & DUNN BY PHIL MCCARTEN/REUTERS/CORBIS



Yes, you'll have to make the trek to Vegas to see this combo package. But it will be worth the effort, Kix enthusiastically notes, trumpeting the appeal of the desert city that never sleeps. "It's great for everybody," he says. "We might not be coming to your city, but Vegas is a fun place to visit. It has great restaurants, shopping, so many things to do. So we're hoping that this will give people a chance to get out of town and have a great vacation."

Reba has previously stated that Caesars Palace is the exclusive venue for

this series of shows. "You won't see this anywhere except Caesars," she explained to *Country Weekly* shortly after the show's announcement.

Fans are already feeling the excitement, if early ticket sales serve as any barometer. Demand was so high that three dates had to be added to the existing schedule. "Caesars is excited for us to come," Reba says. "The ticket sales are going great and we are just ecstatic about that. Right now, it's just June, July and December, but we're hoping we can fill a lot more dates."

That could happen, notes Ronnie, who offers this tidbit of optimism. "I was watching this talk show on TV and Donny Osmond was on," Ronnie begins with a touch of intrigue. "He was saying that when he and Marie first went to Vegas to do their show, they had a six-week contract. And they ended up staying six years." Ronnie lets out a sly chuckle and adds, "So, you never know. This could end up being a year, or longer."

Somehow, we don't think fans will object. **CW**



WORKING MAN

AARON TIPPIN DEFIED THE ODDS—NOW, HE'S CELEBRATING 25 YEARS IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

Aaron Tippin today fairly well bears the same countenance of the Aaron Tippin of 1990, his debut year on the charts. Yes, the hair and moustache show more touches of gray, but Aaron can nonetheless boast the physique of a young whippet, lean and solid due to a regular workout routine he's maintained since his 20s. And he's as energetic as ever, as he's on the cusp of holding down two separate tours this year. They don't call Aaron the "Hillbilly Hercules" for nothing.

Aaron's raring to go as he and his wife, Thea, enter the *Country Weekly*/NASH offices near the heart of downtown Nashville. There's much to talk about, mainly his double celebration to mark his 25th year of recording and performing.

"I'm going to have a 25-year anniversary tour, starting around the end of February," Aaron happily shares in between sips of bottled water. "And I'm also going to have a new album with 25 songs on it, kind of the same deal—to celebrate 25 years."

AGAINST THE ODDS

The milestone is a worthy cause for celebration, for the simple fact that most artists don't enjoy such

longevity. Depending on which expert you consult, the average career lasts anywhere from five to seven years, much like the shelf life of a pro athlete.

"I know I've beaten the odds," Aaron says humbly. "I mean, a lot of my pals that started out around the same time didn't get to have that longevity. The law of averages is against you, for sure. And somewhere along the way it should have gotten me, but for some reason it hasn't." Smiling ever so slightly, Aaron adds, "I just always say that God is not through with me yet."

In the 25 years since his debut single, the defiant "You've Got to Stand for Something," Aaron has enjoyed more than a small share of memorable experiences. He's been part of a Bob Hope military tour, heard his music played in outer space and played the

Grand Ole Opry numerous times (despite a somewhat balky debut, as he'll explain).

He was defying the odds almost from the outset. By the time he moved to Nashville, at the urging of one Jeannie C. Riley, Aaron was into his 20s. When "You've Got to Stand for Something" premiered on the charts, he was 32, considered just this side of Medicare-eligible even in those looser and more liberal times. Today, a 30-year-old newcomer would



be akin to the depths of the ocean of the celebrity of Kim Kardashian—simply unfathomable.

“I was an old guy before I ever got started,” Aaron agrees, smiling good-naturedly. “Most of the ones starting out then were really young guys. I think I’m lucky in that regard. I thought I would just be writing songs, and that would have been a good living. I could write songs all day and then go work out. I had kind of given up on the artist thing.”

By his account, Aaron wouldn’t even have been in Nashville if not for a “prod in the butt” by the redoubtable Jeannie C. Riley of “Harper Valley P.T.A.” fame. Aaron met her while he competed on the TNN talent series *You Can Be a Star* in 1986. “She was my judge on that show,” Aaron recalls. “I had lost out to someone else and I was leaving the set and she stopped me. She told me I had a unique sound and I ought to think about being in the business and coming to Nashville.”

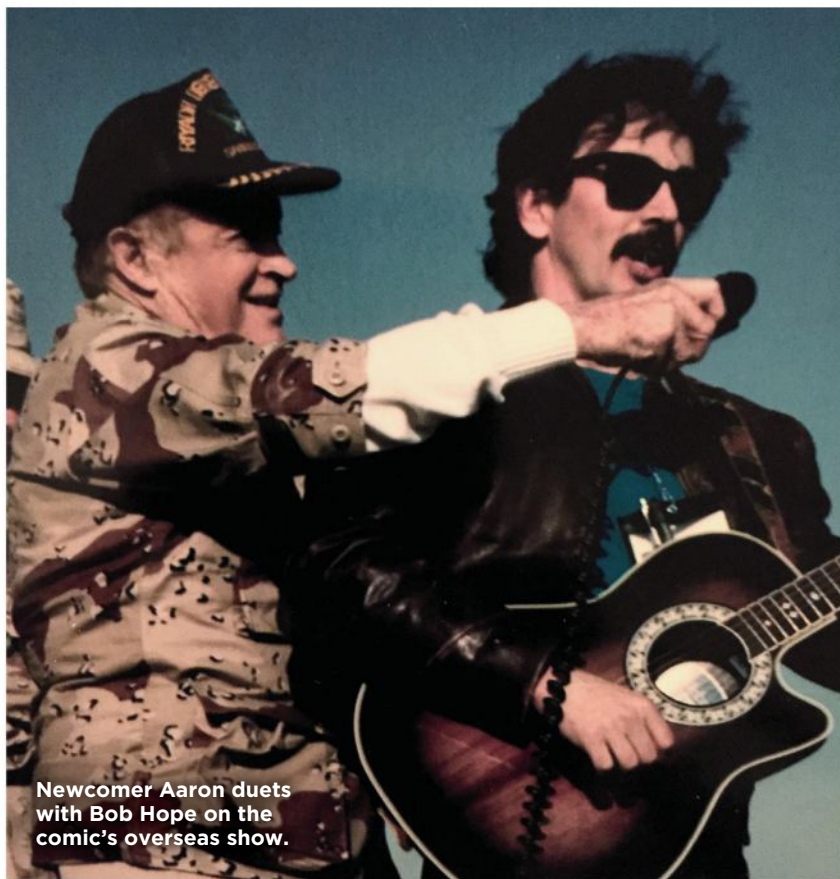
Aaron went back to his South Carolina home, quit his day job, loaded up the car and drove to Music City. His performance on *You Can Be a Star* helped land him a gig with a song publishing company. Aaron later showcased for the RCA label at a local club and eventually scored his record deal. “That was the first time I had played in Nashville, which probably sounds unbelievable,” Aaron says. “But I just never did writers’ nights or things like that. I was in bed by nine o’clock, because I was getting up early to work out.”

THE CALL FROM HOPE

The “artist thing” got off to a rousing start with yet another odds-defying moment. “You’ve Got to Stand for Something” caught the attention of Linda Hope, the daughter of legendary entertainer Bob Hope. During the early 1990s, Bob was still putting together his overseas shows for American troops, and with the U.S. involved in the Desert Storm cam-



PHOTOS COURTESY ABSOLUTE PUBLICITY



Newcomer Aaron duets with Bob Hope on the comic's overseas show.

paign, entertainers and performers were needed to fill out the bill.

"I was living in this low-rent apartment in Mount Juliet, Tennessee," Aaron remembers, "and my manager called me. He said, 'You might not believe this, but Bob Hope's daughter just called me. She asked if you would like to go to Saudi Arabia with the Bob Hope show.' I think somebody had dropped out or something. Now, how amazing was that? The song was just barely on the charts, and next thing, I'm on a plane from Nashville to Los Angeles to go overseas."

Aaron sits a bit straighter in his chair and continues. "Now, here's the power of Bob Hope," he says, smiling. "By four o'clock that next day, I had every passport, every piece of documentation that I needed to leave the country, things that would have normally taken days. The whole tour was an experience I will never forget."

It also spurred his commitment to supporting the military. Over the

years, Aaron has given up holidays and spent his own off-road dates performing for American servicemen and women in Iraq, Afghanistan and other faraway countries. Aaron's hits like "Working Man's Ph.D." and "Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly" certainly carry patriotic themes.

As such, Aaron's fan base includes a broad band of soldiers and military personnel. One certain fan, the wife of NASA pilot Rick Sturckow, selected Aaron's "Big Boy Toys" from his 2000 album, *People Like Us*, to play during her husband's mission aboard the Discovery space shuttle in 2001.

"They were allowed two pieces of music and they chose my song," Aaron relates with a grin that would span the surface of any planet. "They played it around four in the morning, so we actually woke up the space shuttle. NASA sent me pictures of the CD floating in space and you can actually see Earth in the background." Talk about a truly ethereal experience.

A DEBUT TO REMEMBER

Or perhaps, one to forget. Aaron recalls his first time playing the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville.

Before Aaron Tippin could play the Grand Ole Opry, he had to do something about his shirts. "They had an issue with me and my sleeveless shirts," Aaron recalls. "So, what did I do? I got some sleeves."

The Opry invited Aaron to perform on the famous stage shortly after "You've Got to Stand for Something" became a Top 10 hit. Now, guess which song he messed up on during his debut.

"The reality hit me like a ton of bricks," Aaron says, laughing. "I ran out there and I'm doing great and I got through the chorus. And then, I looked down at that circle of wood and I was so in awe of standing there. The next thing I remember is thinking, 'Oh, no. What's the next word?' I just forgot. So, I just did the first verse over again. And that was my Grand Ole Opry debut. I sang the same verse on my own song twice."



Star-spangled Aaron performs on the Grand Ole Opry in 2012.



25 AND COUNTING

Now, 25 years after his debut, Aaron still attacks his career with a youthful vigor. He stays busy on the road as part of the popular Roots & Boots Tour, a package show featuring Aaron, Sammy Kershaw, Darryl Worley and James Otto.

They're all buddies who basically came up together (with the younger James the exception) and have survived the music business and all of its vagaries. "I love being out there with Sammy and all of them," Aaron says. "It's amazing how well those shows go over. We have fun singing on each other's hits and doing our own material. Sammy does this harmony thing on 'My Blue Angel' [Aaron's 1993 Top 10 hit] that is just really neat and different. And we swap anecdotes and stories, and the fans love that. It's become something that I really want to do."

On top of that tour, Aaron will also embark on his 25th anniversary road show in late February. The tour will coincide with Aaron's new album, titled 25, commemorating his 25 years as an artist. And, he coyly hints, the album comes with several surprises, not in terms of guest stars but rather in its diversity of styles.



"Let's just say that five of the songs on there are genres of music that you've never heard me do," Aaron notes with a smile. He relents and offers up one example, a duet with his son Tom on the Al Green R&B chestnut "Let's Stay Together." Aaron confesses, "I can't do it quite like Al, but I was always a big fan of his. In my day, that was 'dating music.' But you should hear Tom. Man, he sings his tail off."

The album also includes 10 of Aaron's biggest hits, sequenced in chronological order by their release dates, and 10 new tunes. "I'm really proud of this," Aaron says. "I wrote all of the new songs, and it's exciting to get those on here."

This July, Aaron has yet another reason to celebrate: his 20th wedding anniversary with wife Thea,

Aaron listens to a playback and (left) records a song for his new album. (Inset) A family photo with wife Thea and sons Ted (rear) and Tom



a singer and songwriter herself. Among many tunes, Thea co-wrote Aaron's 2000 No. 1 single "Kiss This." The couple and their sons, Ted and Tom, live on a 500-acre farm outside Nashville in a log house. Tom has aspirations of following in dad's musical footsteps. "All he wants to do is mess around with music," Aaron shares. Older son Ted, meanwhile, focuses on a time-honored Tippin family pastime, flying. As most fans know, Aaron was a corporate airline pilot in his pre-artist days and is currently a certified pilot instructor. He's passed on that love of the wide-open skies to both of his sons.

In the simplest of terms, life is good these days for Aaron. "I love the fact that I'm doing what I want to do," he says. "I don't know that I'll see another 25 years in the business, but you never know. My health is good and I still want to play for the folks."

So, how does it feel to have the big 2-5 under your belt? Aaron has the perfect summation. "I mean, I toured with Bob Hope, I have had my music played in space. My family is wonderful," Aaron reflects. "I have got to be the luckiest hillbilly who ever lived." **CW**

[**ON TOUR**]

BIG SMO

SMALL TOWN SCANDAL TOUR

Feb. 23

Lethbridge, Alberta

Average Joe's

Feb. 25

**Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan**

Outlaws

Feb. 27

Winnipeg, Alberta

The Oak

March 4

Tulsa, Okla.

IDL Ballroom

March 5

Stillwater, Okla.

Tumbleweed

March 6

Fort Worth, Texas

Billy Bob's Texas

March 7

Kiln, Miss.

Boggin' in the
Dirty South
at Muddy Joe's

March 12

Louisville, Ky.

Mercury
Ballroom

March 13

Bloomington, Ind.

Bluebird

March 14

Columbia, Mo.

Snorty
Horse Saloon

March 25

Columbus, Ohio

The
Bluestone

March 26

Lafayette, Ind.

Hideaway

March 27

Rootstown, Ohio

Dusty Armadillo

March 28

Dayton, Ohio

Oddbody's Music
Room

June 13

Goldsboro, N.C.

Busco
Beach and
ATV Park

June 28

Ozark, Ark.

Thunder
on the
Mountain

July 2

Uncasville, Conn.

Wolf Den at
Mohegan Sun



A full-page photograph of Kelsea Ballerini. She is a young woman with long, wavy blonde hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a thick, patterned knit cardigan in shades of blue, white, and brown. In her right hand, she holds a brown paper coffee cup with a gold-colored sleeve. The background is slightly out of focus, showing what appears to be a doorway or a window with a green frame.

**BEHIND
THE SCENES**

**KELSEA
BALLERINI**

HEAT SEEKER

**NEWCOMER KELSEA
BALLERINI BRINGS
SUMMER TO ONE
COLD VIDEO SHOOT
IN MUSIC CITY.**

PHOTOS BY CARISSA RICCARDI

IT IS A CHILLY JANUARY DAY in Nashville on the set of Kelsea Ballerini's video shoot for "Love Me Like You Mean It." The crew, Kelsea's manager and record label staff are all hovering around space heaters, bundled up in winter clothes, sipping hot chocolate and coffee, while the cute newcomer shoots her parts with bare arms, bare legs and bare feet exposed to the elements. But that's how you make video magic, right?

"It is summer. It is the middle of January and summertime," says Kelsea with a laugh, now basking in the warmth of a small trailer on the set. "There are a lot of heaters blowing on me, which is fantastic. And I have little heating pads in my heels right now. It's good, it's fun. We go inside every time we can. And this trailer is heated."

Kelsea worked on the clip with sizzling-hot video director Kristin Barlowe, who served as part direc-

tor, part photographer and, from the sidelines watching the shoot, part super-enthusiastic cheerleader. "Oh my gosh, so I literally have wanted to work with Kristen for years, since I moved to town and have just heard wonderful things about her," says Kelsea, bubbling with enthusiasm. "And for a first video you want to feel comfortable and excited, and I feel like her energy and spirit is so vivacious. And she gives good direction.



From hair and makeup to an orchestrated game of Twister, it's all fun for Kelsea Ballerini on the set of her video shoot for "Love Me Like You Mean It."



First video, it's good to have that."

To add to the comfortable environment, Kelsea brought her best friend, Grace, and her dog, Josh, to the shoot with her. Their presence is helping her to relax a little bit, which is quite important considering that Kelsea just wants people to see who she really is in the video. "One of the things that is really important for me to be is approachable and real and genuine," she says with a smile. "I

feel like with a lot of girls you want to be overdone and really beautiful and all that stuff, but for me, I want to be normal and real. That's who I am, that's who I've always been. My favorite artists are the ones that are real and approachable."

With "Love Me Like You Mean It" continuing its climb up the charts, Kelsea is ready to make her mark on country music—hopefully surrounded by a few of her female peers.

"I feel like 2015, hopefully for me, but for girls in general, is going to be a good year," she says confidently. "There are so many strong girls and we're all so different, but strong in what we do, and it's working."

"Strong" might be an understatement for Kelsea, who departs the interview and gamely heads back into the cold with only her cutoffs and a button-up shirt to protect her.

— TAMMY RAGUSA

LIFE IN THE WOODS

RYAN BINGHAM's voyage of solitude leads to his new album, *Fear and Saturday Night*.

When transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau immersed himself in nature at Walden Pond for two years in the 1840s to write his opus, *Walden*, he noted that he never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude. Ryan Bingham borrowed a page straight out of Thoreau's book to write his new album, *Fear and Saturday Night*, as he secluded himself in the mountains of California in an Airstream trailer for a month or so without the modern conveniences of electricity, cellphone or Internet.

"Anytime I write, in general, I need to be in solitude," says Ryan. "It's just something I've always had to do. I need to be alone to get inside my head and find the things that I want to write about. I've never done well at just sitting down and crafting a story or song just with pen and paper. I need to get away from all the distractions and let the stuff start bubbling up."

What a lot of people forget—or don't know—about Thoreau's experience is that he didn't live in total seclusion. His cabin was on the edge of town and he often had visitors or left it for short periods of time. Likewise, Ryan didn't stay in the Airstream for a month straight. He went to his getaway on three separate occasions, re-entering civilization after a week or 10 days to, you know, see his wife, Anna, and restock his cooler.

"Anna found the place," says Ryan. "She knew I was looking for a place to go write in. It was a trailer from the '50s but it had been redone all original. She told me to check it out, so I went up there and stayed a few

nights and really enjoyed it. It's stuck back in the mountains, and when you woke up in the morning you could have been anywhere. It was the perfect spot to kinda get away from everything. I took an ice chest full of eggs and coffee and some other things. It was really nice. The gas stove worked to cook food and I had a little table and some candles for light and that was about it."



The result of Ryan's getaway is *Fear and Saturday Night*, a record that's so rich and alive—with songs like the title track and "Broken Heart Tattoo"—it begs only to be caged for study and then rereleased into the wild. It's real. When Ryan sings something, you believe it. And there aren't many singer/songwriters who can conjure up that feeling at will. You believe it because Ryan has lived it in his 33 short years on this earth—from a childhood spent bouncing in and out of New Mexico, Texas and California, getting passed around to extended family members while his parents battled alcoholism, to his cowboy days on the rodeo circuit when he was hard-living out

of his truck and working odd jobs to survive. Even his brightest of bright spots was wrought with pain. In 2009, Ryan made a name for himself with "The Weary Kind," a song he co-wrote for the film *Crazy Heart* that earned him an Oscar, a Golden Globe and a Grammy. Undoubtedly the high point of his young career, the whirlwind experience of late-night television appearances, press interviews and awards (like being named 2010 Americana Artist of the Year) were marred by his mother's death from alcoholism and his father's suicide.

His 2012 album, *Tomorrowland*, delved into many of those hardships, and singing the record live actually took a toll on him emotionally, but in *Fear*, you can hear a silver lining in Ryan's past heartache, and a lot of that has to do with his marriage to Anna and the upcoming birth of their first child.

"*Tomorrowland* was a real difficult record for me, it was a real difficult time in my life in general," he says. "Several years around that album were not the most fun for me. It's part of the ins and outs of life. The past couple of years, I've been in a better place personally and having a lot of fun. I feel like the songs on *Fear* are just a reflection of where I am in my life at the moment. I'm just following the trail of bread crumbs telling me where to go."

You can hear the pangs of promise in his voice, too, like in the forward-looking "Hands of Time" or "Top Shelf Drug," which touts the euphoria of being addicted to the love of a good woman. *Fear* won't be confused with the feel-good record of the year, but not all albums are meant to be sung at the top of your lungs going 80 down the interstate. Some albums are more fittingly enjoyed on vinyl with a nice glass of bourbon by candlelight. Or maybe, for *Fear*, you go to your getaway—wherever it may be—and give it a listen, assuming you have a modern convenience that will allow you to play it. We think Thoreau would approve this time.

— JIM CASEY



PHOTO BY ANNA AXSTER/SHORE FIRE MEDIA

[**CATCHING UP WITH**]

A *Changed* Man

T. Graham Brown returns with his first studio album in nine years and a renewed spirituality.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN



THERE WAS A TIME when T. Graham Brown was the life of the party—and it nearly killed him. But thanks to his strong and determined wife, Sheila, and his own commitment to reshaping his life, the soulful Georgia singer has stayed a viable player in the game, nearly 20 years after getting sober.

This past year proved especially redemptive for T. Graham, as he released his first studio album in nine years, the prophetically titled *Forever Changed*. The record features guest performances by an A-list group of artists, including Vince Gill, The Oak Ridge Boys, R&B icon Steve Cropper and the somewhat reclusive Leon Russell.

The gospel-tinged project has produced some appropriately “good news” for T. Graham, mainly with a Grammy award nomination for Best Gospel Roots Album. Months after its initial release on the relatively small Mansion Entertainment label, *Forever Changed* has now picked up some major-label distribution, making it available to a wider segment of the record-buying public. And now, fans can find *Forever Changed* at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store locations and through the Cracker Barrel website.

Fairly heady stuff for a record that was solely intended as a fundraising effort. “We did it to benefit this church-building ministry that Sheila and I are part of,” T. Graham explains in his signature sandpary voice. The church is being built in Guatemala through the charitable organization International Cooperating Ministries. “It’s going to make a lot of money, hopefully, for the church-building fund.”

With this serious goal in mind, the album was a joy to make, as T. Graham notes. He rounded up some of his longtime buddies to flesh out the recording, which contains gospel and R&B standards, original tunes and remakes of a couple of his earlier hits, “Wine Into Water” and “Which Way to Pray,” the latter written by Bill Anderson. The album’s first single, sent to both country radio

and Southern gospel stations, is “He’ll Take Care of You,” a vocal collaboration with Vince Gill.

“We just started calling people,” T. Graham recalls. “I have known Leon Russell a long time and I have been on a couple of his albums. I just called him up and he was right there. For ‘He’ll Take Care of You,’ somebody on the production crew said we needed a Vince Gill type on there. And I said, ‘Heck, let’s just call Vince.’ We have been

friends for probably 25 years or more. I mean, you might as well get the real thing, right?” T. Graham adds with a raspy laugh. “We called Jason Crabb, Jimmy Fortune and some other people and they all said yes to it. It was really cool. We all had a blast doing it.”

Listeners of any generation will likely know one of the standout tracks, the R&B classic “People Get Ready,” recorded by artists that range from The Impressions to Vanilla Fudge and a Jeff Beck/Rod Stewart teaming. For T. Graham’s version, Leon Russell, The Oak Ridge Boys, Jason Crabb and the inimitable Steve Cropper on guitar all contribute mightily. It all makes for a rousing affair that’ll take you straight to the heavens.

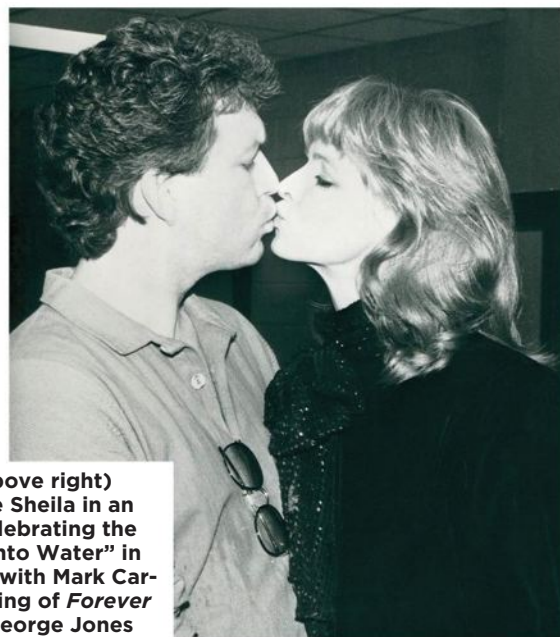
“I guess it’s sort of a cliché to cut that,” T. Graham admits. “It’s such a standard in gospel

and in R&B. But that track was laying around for another project and we thought, man, let’s use it.”

There’s considerable enthusiasm in T. Graham’s voice as he describes the song’s reworking from his original recording. “We had the track and put David Hungate [from rock band Toto] on bass and changed that part up a little,” T. Graham says. “It took on a whole new feel after that. It turned out to be one of the best ones on the record.”



T. Graham asked fans to help with the building of a church. Proceeds from his new album (top) will go toward the church project.



(Clockwise from above right) T. Graham and wife Sheila in an early photo and celebrating the success of "Wine Into Water" in 1998; in the studio with Mark Carman for the recording of *Forever Changed*; joining George Jones and friends for "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair"



T. GRAHAM BROWN CONT.

T. Graham also re-cut his 1998 single "Wine Into Water," a song he co-wrote about his battles with alcoholism. Jimmy Fortune, formerly of The Statler Brothers and now in the midst of a solo career, provided backing and accompanying vocals on the song.

"Jimmy and I are really close friends," T. Graham says. "He's like a brother to me and we do a lot of shows together." T. Graham figures that he's recorded "Wine Into Water" about four different times, but keeps it on the radar because of the message. "There is a whole new generation that hasn't heard it," he explains graciously.

While hardly his biggest hit, as he scored No. 1 singles with "Hell and

High Water," "Don't Go to Strangers" and "Darlene" during the late 1980s, "Wine Into Water" is likely his most inspirational. It's an inevitable conversation starter, with folks approaching him about the effect that it's had on their personal lives.

"I always remember this e-mail I got one time," T. Graham says in humble, explanatory fashion. "The guy says this might sound funny, but I'm sitting here drinking my last whiskey listening to 'Wine Into Water.' He wrote, 'I have decided to change my life.' He had two young daughters and he just didn't want them growing up around drinking. I have had so many people come up to me and tell me that they stopped

drinking because of that song. That kind of stuff happens all the time."

And like the tune's protagonist, he's been there. T. Graham can take you to school on the subjects of alcoholism, partying and blowing through money like a sailor on a weekend pass.

During his peak period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, T. Graham was enjoying more than just radio hits. He also provided the singing voice for the highly successful Taco Bell "Run for the Border" TV ads, which provided him with a lucrative second income. The good life was his, and he reveled in its excesses.

"I started drinking and partying too much," he confesses. All the money he

NO. 1 PARTY BY PATRICIA PRESLEY; PERSONAL PHOTOS COURTESY T. GRAHAM BROWN; FACEBOOK; COPY BY CHRIS HOLLO/HOLLO PHOTOGRAPHICS/GRAND OLE OPRY

“When I talk about drugs and alcohol, people listen to me because I have been there.”



T. Graham with
Angie and Troy
Gentry at the Opry

was making from the Taco Bell commercials? He fairly well spent it all.

His raucous lifestyle was damaging his career and disrupting his marriage to Sheila. In the mid-1990s, he got straightened out and sober. “Sheila stood by me all that time,” T. Graham confides solemnly. “Our marriage was in a bad place for a while, but it’s all better now. Sheila and I are happier than we’ve ever been. We’ve been married 35 years,” he joyfully adds, “and we’re having a ball.”

Family life stays on the sunny side with the prowess of their son, named Acme (think of the *Road Runner* cartoon series), who’s finding his niche as a musician in

Nashville. “He’s a session drummer and has a couple of bands going on,” T. Graham says with fatherly pride. “He definitely followed a musical path and we are just so happy for him.”

Beyond recording, T. Graham stays busy outside of the studio with touring gigs and occasional dates at the Grand Ole Opry, where he’s an audience favorite. He hops on board several music-themed cruises to exotic ports and plays shows overseas.

On the personal side, T. Graham tries to lend a hand to those who struggle with addictions and whatever demons pursue them. He’s not a “preachy” sort, choosing instead to come armed with a message of hope.

“There is nothing worse sometimes than a reformed . . . whatever,” T. Graham says, laughing. “But it’s not my style to preach. I do some speaking engagement things and when I talk about drugs and alcohol and every bad thing I’ve done, people listen to me because they know I have been there. I think they know that I am trying to help and not just talk.”

Certainly, he walks the walk. T. Graham’s a living example of turning one’s life around, if not the complete 360, then surely a 180. “I’ve been on the dark underbelly and I am back out in the light,” he likes to say. “I just want to keep moving forward. That’s really what it’s all about.” **CW**

THE STARS ALIGN

SCOTTY MCCREERY, GARY ALLAN and **NATALIE STOVALL** did more than just make wishes . . . they helped make wishes come true at the Stars for Wishes fundraiser for the Middle Tennessee chapter of Make-A-Wish. Hosted by television personality Melissa Rycroft, the special event took place at Nashville's Gaylord Opryland Hotel in January and raised more than \$250,000. The 600 guests began their evening with a silent auction, followed by a four-course dinner prepared by local chefs. The evening was capped with heartwarming stories of amazing wishes being granted in the local community, as well as performances by Gary, Scotty and Jonathan Cain of Journey, who put the event together.



Scotty with Make-A-Wish kids (from left) Makalyn, Jessica and Thomas

PHOTO BY RICK DIAMOND/MAKE-A-WISH MIDDLE TENNESSEE



(Above) Scotty McCreery (center) performs for the attendees; (below) the silent auction helped raise more than \$250,000 for Make-A-Wish.



Beth Torres, president/CEO of Make-A-Wish Middle Tennessee, and Jessica address the guests.



(Above, from left) Gary Allan performs; Make-A-Wish kids Makalyn, Jessica and Makenzie are all winners.



The Street Corner Symphony was one of the many talented acts to donate both their time and performance skills for the special event.



(From left) James Bavendam, Natalie Stovall, Mike Snider of William Morris Endeavor Entertainment and Dean Alexander were all in attendance; (right) it wouldn't be a fundraiser without a little fun-dancing.



[REVIEWS]



SINGLES

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

“Little Toy Guns”

19 RECORDINGS/ARISTA NASHVILLE

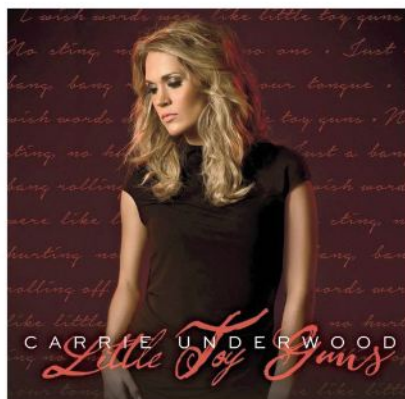
GRADE: B-

In “Blown Away,” Carrie Underwood evoked the fury of a tornado to examine a life shattered by parental abuse. It underscored Carrie’s longstanding appreciation for more serious material, a trend that continues with her new single, “Little Toy Guns,” from the *Greatest Hits: Decade #1* collection. This time, the subject is a little girl caught in the crossfire of her fighting parents and how she tries to block it out. Propelled by forceful drums, this one is full-on Seri-

ous Carrie with a minor-key melody that just feels heavier and heavier as it piles on the layers of tension and never quite resolves. Carrie is magnificent as usual, pitching her vocals up to a gale force howl by

the end. Unfortunately, the song all hangs on the weak idea of wanting words to be like little toy guns and not hurting when people are angry at one another. I feel for this kid, I really do—no one should have to bear the psychic wounds that come from seeing their parents continually shred one another—but surely there’s a better comparison to be used. Little fluffy clouds? Precious puppy dogs? Because, as we’ve all seen from events in 2014, waving a little toy gun around can actually get you killed.

— JON FREEMAN



AT A GLANCE: A heavy-handed shot from one of country’s finest vocalists.

CARRIE BY JEREMY COWART/SCHMIDT RELATIONS; PARMALINE BY ED RODE/BBR; CASEY COURTESY SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE

PARMALEE

"Already Callin' You Mine"

STONEY CREEK RECORDS

GRADE: **C+**

More than two years after releasing their Stoney Creek Records debut album, *Feels Like Carolina*, Parmalee has dropped their fourth single, "Already Callin' You Mine," from the record. The tune is an up-tempo "love" song with a catchy hook that stays in line sonically with what you'd expect from the North Carolina four-piece that found success with their two previous singles, "Carolina" and "Close Your Eyes, which went to No. 1 and No. 4, respectively, on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart. While Matt Thomas' vocals are as crisp as a Carolina microbrew and there's a nifty guitar solo toward the end, "Already" lacks the lyrical creativity and sentimentality of the previous singles. Instead—in a bar setting—the song comes across more stalker-ish than romantic as it goes from zero (*you barely know me*) to 60 (*I'm already calling you mine*) in a matter of seconds. It's a love-at-first-sight concept that falls flatter than a bad pickup line, but it will resonate with radio because . . . well, some people fall for pickup lines. — **JIM CASEY**



AT A GLANCE: Is stalking still cute?



CASEY JAMES

"Fall Apart"

19 RECORDINGS/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE

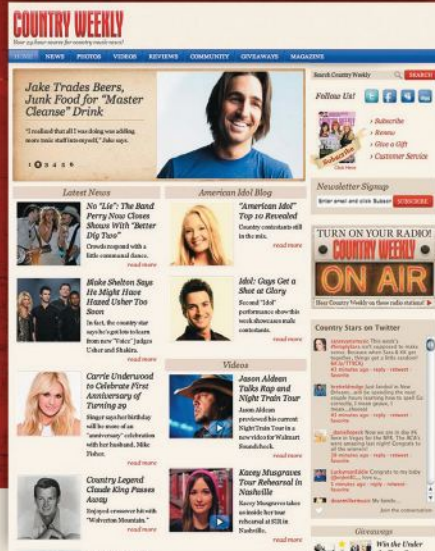
GRADE: **B**

Casey makes the most of this power ballad (to the nth degree) with some soulful, romantic phrasing, hitting the high notes with an unusual combo of force and grace. The melody is simply lovely, a bit complex without going over the listener's head, and the first-rate production, laden with strings and rolling drums that build to crescendo level, definitely catches your ear. Lyrically is where "Fall Apart" does just that, echoing sentiments that

we've heard before in countless other tunes. It covers the familiar territory of how seeing an ex-lover can basically rip you to shreds. You could almost hear this in the hands of Journey or REO Speedwagon back in the day, but Casey gives this a cool, contemporary feel. — **BOB PAXMAN**

AT A GLANCE: Heartbreak done with conviction and feeling.

GRADES: **A** OUTSTANDING | **B** ABOVE AVERAGE | **C** AVERAGE | **D** BELOW AVERAGE | **F** #FAIL



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Spotlighting artists who
reside on the fringes
of country music

RYAN CULWELL

FOR FANS OF:

Jason Isbell, Steve Earle, John Prine

HOME ISN'T ALWAYS THE easiest or kindest place to live, and even though you may move far away in search of a different life, it can leave you scarred and awed like few other things. For singer/songwriter Ryan Culwell, that place is the Flatlands of the Texas Panhandle—the barren but beautiful setting of the Dust Bowl, a wide-open vista set against hardscrabble living.

Now a Nashville resident along with his wife and kids, Ryan has channeled his experiences into his

album, *Flatlands*, for something that is both deeply personal and universal in its depiction of struggle. The characters in these songs are hardened by the foreboding landscape, where the setting sun is like a drop of blood and it feels like you could fall off the edge of the earth if you walked too far. Those surroundings had a profound impact on Ryan in existential matters.

“You realize you are insignificant and at the same time you’re out there with so much space, there’s such an expanse that you feel very small,” he says. “But you’re also so singular that you realize, I exist, I am a profound thing on this horizon. I have meaning for some reason.”

When Ryan was younger, “songwriter” wasn’t exactly something one chose as a job. The oil fields or the farm were a much more likely prospect than being on the stage.

“I didn’t grow up with that being a vocational idea. It was more of an identity,” he explains of songwriting. “At 10, I thought I was gonna be a poet. I was writing poetry literally with Sharpies on the walls. My mom

was like, really? But inside of that culture, there’s no room for that. It’s like, get your ass to work.”

That idea is reflected throughout *Flatlands*. In “Red River,” the characters accept their reality and the titular river holds a thousand years of toil on its banks. In the nightmarish blues tune “I Think I’ll Be Their God,” Ryan embodies a violent paranoia for anyone who might try to take what’s his. And in “Never Gonna Cry,” the futility of backbreaking work and insignificance in the grand scheme of things weighs heavily. At some point, Ryan realized his family and friends back home inspired these sketches, so he dedicated the album to them.

“It was like, you guys deserve to hear this,” he recalls. “I think it could be meaningful to you, and then coming around full circle and realizing, those are all versions of me. I’m speaking to myself. I need to say this for myself so I can have some sort of growth.”

Ryan may be out of the Flatlands, but they haven’t left him.

— JON FREEMAN

ESSENTIAL LISTENING:

- ▶ “I Think I’ll Be Their God”
- ▶ “Never Gonna Cry”
- ▶ “Darkness”
- ▶ “Red River”

All songs from *Flatlands*.

For more information,
please visit ryanculwell.com.

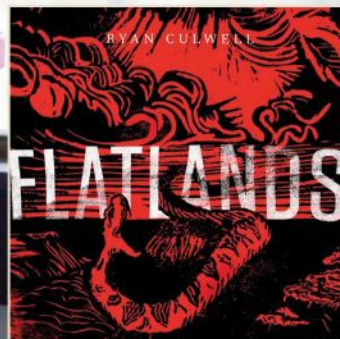


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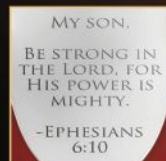
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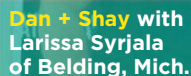
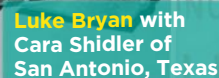
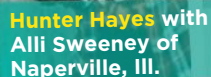
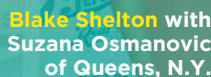
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➔ **Country Weekly** readers rub elbows with their favorite stars . . .



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[FLASHBACK]

THIS WEEK IN COUNTRY



**FEB.
23,
1983**

What song stayed on the minds of Grammy voters in 1983? The apparent answer was "Always on My Mind," the 1982 No. 1 hit by **WILLIE NELSON**. At the milestone 25th annual Grammy awards show, held Feb. 23, 1983, in Los Angeles, "Always on My Mind" nabbed three top honors. Songwriters Wayne Carson, Johnny Christopher and Mark James received awards for Country Song of the Year along with the night's biggest honor, Song of the Year, which represents all genres of music. Willie himself earned Best Country Vocal Performance, Male, for his rendition of the tune.

GEORGE STRAIT made a last-minute decision about a song called "It Just Comes Natural," and it, naturally, turned out to be the right call. Songwriters Marv Green and Jim Collins finished the song, recorded a demo and sent the tape to George's manager, Erv Woolsey. And they came in right under the wire. "All of the songs had been selected for George's album," Jim recalled to *Country Weekly* in 2007. "But I understand when George heard it, he walked into the studio and said, 'I want to cut this.' It was the last song put on the album." George released "It Just Comes Natural," which became the title track for the new album, in September 2006. On Feb. 24, 2007, "It Just Comes Natural" topped the charts, giving George his 42nd *Billboard* No. 1 single.



**FEB.
24,
2007**

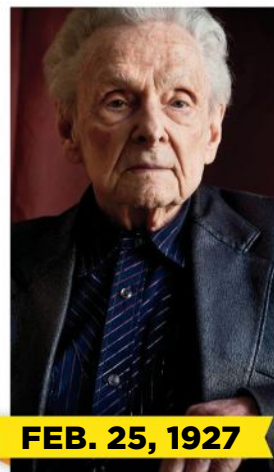
CARRIE UNDERWOOD added to her ever-growing résumé when she performed in her first acting role on an episode of the highly rated CBS sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, which aired March 1, 2010. Carrie was cast as Tiffany, a pharmaceutical sales rep, which lead character Barney (Neil Patrick Harris) terms the "hot chick" profession of his generation. Reviewers generally gave Carrie high marks for her performance, but she maintained she was not about to switch careers full-time. "I couldn't see myself saying that I'm going to go into acting and be a serious actress," Carrie told *Country Weekly* in 2010. "I have so much respect for those people. I don't think I could ever do what they do."



**MARCH
1,
2010**

To read more on **Ralph Stanley**, go to CountryWeekly.com/magazine/vault

BIRTHDAYS



FEB. 25, 1927

RALPH STANLEY

is one of the giants of bluegrass music. He was born in McClure, Va., and received his first banjo as a teenager. His latest album, *Ralph Stanley & Friends: Man of Constant Sorrow*, has just been released through Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores.

**FEB. 23, 1972
STEVE HOLY**

**FEB. 24, 1958
SAMMY KERSHAW**

**FEB. 25, 1978
SHAWNA THOMPSON**
of Thompson Square

**FEB. 27, 1936
CHUCK GLASER**
of The Glaser Brothers

**FEB. 27, 1959
JOHNNY VAN ZANT**
of Van Zant

**FEB. 28, 1977
JASON ALDEAN**

**MARCH 1, 1954
JANIS OLIVER**
of Sweethearts
of the Rodeo

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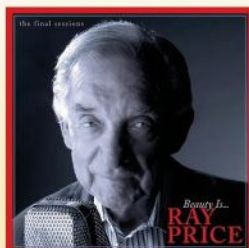
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[CHARTS]

WEEK ENDING FEB. 14, 2015

ALBUMS



Following the one-year anniversary of Ray Price's death, the singer's final album reenters the chart at No. 22, the same position it occupied upon its debut in April 2014.

SINGLES

With "I See You," Luke Bryan joins Brad Paisley and Blake Shelton as the only artists ever to notch five No. 1s on the Country Airplay chart from one album.



Brad Paisley and director Jim Shea ("Alcohol") have whipped up another chart-topping clip.

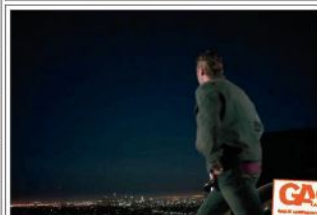
CMT VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	1	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
2	2	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
3	3	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
4	4	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
5	6	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
6	5	MAN AGAINST MACHINE GARTH BROOKS
7	7	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
8	9	METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC STURGILL SIMPSON
9	8	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
10	13	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
11	10	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
12	18	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
13	12	GREATEST HITS SO FAR . . . ZAC BROWN BAND
14	15	THE COWBOY RIDES AWAY: LIVE FROM AT&T STADIUM • GEORGE STRAIT
15	20	I DON'T DANCE LEE BRICE
16	14	RALPH STANLEY & FRIENDS: MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW • RALPH STANLEY
17	11	BRING YOU BACK BRETT ELDRIDGE
18	19	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
19	17	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
20	35	21 COUNTRY HITS VARIOUS ARTISTS
21	21	WHERE IT'S AT DUSTIN LYNCH
22	—	BEAUTY IS . . . : THE FINAL SESSIONS RAY PRICE
23	24	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
24	23	SUNDOWN HEAVEN TOWN TIM MCGRAW
25	22	747 LADY ANTEBELLUM

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	I SEE YOU LUKE BRYAN
2	2	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
3	4	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
4	6	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
5	7	LIKE A COWBOY RANDY HOUSER
6	8	LONELY TONIGHT BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
7	9	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
8	3	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
9	10	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDRIDGE
10	11	TAKE IT ON BACK CHASE BRYANT
11	12	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
12	14	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
13	5	TIL IT'S GONE KENNY CHESNEY
14	13	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
15	15	AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY COLE SWINDELL
16	17	FREESTYLE LADY ANTEBELLUM
17	18	WHAT WE AIN'T GOT JAKE OWEN
18	19	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY
19	23	HOMEGROWN ZAC BROWN BAND
20	20	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
21	21	A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR TYLER FARR
22	24	SMOKE A THOUSAND HORSES
23	22	TRAILER HITCH KRISTIAN BUSH
24	26	SHE DON'T LOVE YOU ERIC PASLAY
25	27	LITTLE RED WAGON MIRANDA LAMBERT
26	25	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
27	28	DON'T IT BILLY CURRINGTON
28	40	RAISE 'EM UP KEITH URBAN FEATURING ERIC CHURCH
29	29	DRUNK AMERICANS TOBY KEITH
30	32	HARD TO BE COOL JOE NICHOLS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	PERFECT STORM BRAD PAISLEY
2	4	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
3	3	TIL IT'S GONE KENNY CHESNEY
4	5	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
5	6	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
6	9	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
7	8	LIKE A COWBOY RANDY HOUSER
8	1	SHOTGUN RIDER TIM MCGRAW
9	11	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDRIDGE
10	10	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER

SOURCE: CMT



Blake Shelton nurses his late-night loneliness in the City of Angels, bringing a slice of L.A. noir to No. 1.

GAC VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	4	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
2	1	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
3	2	SHOTGUN RIDER TIM MCGRAW
4	5	PERFECT STORM BRAD PAISLEY
5	3	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
6	8	GENTLE ON MY MIND THE BAND PERRY
7	10	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
8	6	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER
9	11	WHAT WE AIN'T GOT JAKE OWEN
10	7	PUT MY HEART DOWN SARA EVANS

SOURCE: GAC

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COUNTRY WEEKLY

Anxiously awaiting that new album from your favorite artist?
Eager to discuss the hot concert you just saw?
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CountryWeekly.com



WHO SAYS?

“I like to make people think a little.”



B MIRANDA LAMBERT



A BRAD PAISLEY



C KACEY MUSGRAVES

ANSWER: C

COUNTRY WEEKLY

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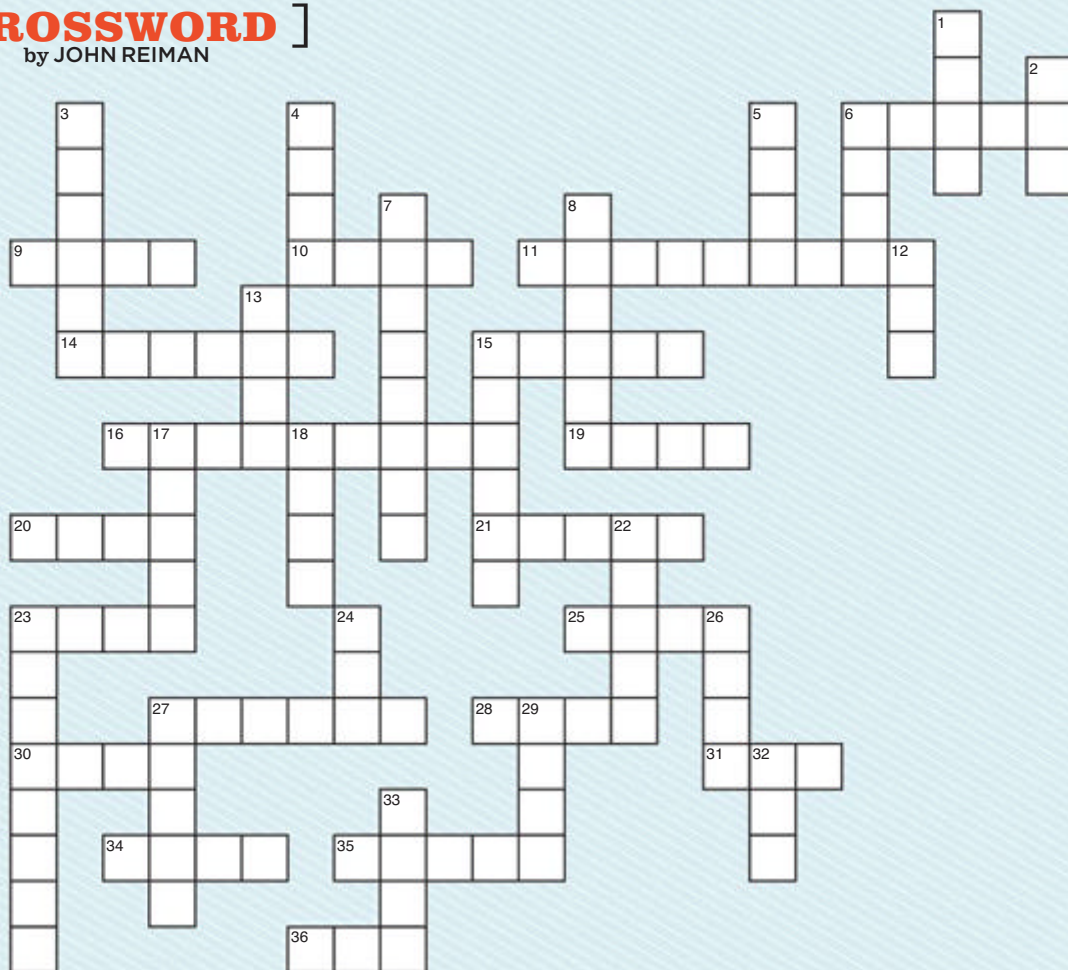
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[CROSSWORD]

by JOHN REIMAN



ACROSS

- 6 "Hell on the Heart" singer
- 9 Chase Bryant's "Take It On ____"
- 10 1980s hit singer ____ Thomas Conley
- 11 Miranda Lambert's ____ Platinum Tour
- 14 "That Don't Impress Me Much" singer
- 15 "The Secret of Life" singer
- 16 City in western North Carolina
- 19 "Country Boy" singer
- 20 ____ dream
- 21 New artist Brandy ____
- 23 A main knitting stitch

- 25 "The Greatest Man I Never Knew" singer
- 27 New artist Kelleigh ____
- 28 Billy Currington's "____ It"
- 30 Travis Tritt's "____ Me I Was Dreaming"
- 31 Dixie Chicks' "Without ____"
- 34 Mark Wills' "Wish You Were ____"
- 35 "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose" singer
- 36 Raelynn's "____ Made Girls"

DOWN

- 1 Sara Evans' "____ to Fly"

- 2 A loud confusing mixture of noises; clamor
- 3 New artist Jamie Lynn ____
- 4 TV show ____ of *Thrones*
- 5 Cry ____
- 6 Opposite of #33 Down
- 7 *Halfway to Heaven* artist
- 8 Capital of Saskatchewan, Canada
- 12 1980s singer Seals
- 13 Jason Aldean's "Take a Little ____"
- 15 A variety of ____ is spoken in Quebec

- 17 Rhymes with #30 Across
- 18 World Cup champion Lindsey ____
- 22 "Make Me Wanna" singer
- 23 Lisbon is here
- 24 Baltimore Ravens quarterback Flacco
- 26 Tennis champ Roddick or Murray
- 27 The Judds' "Maybe Your Baby's Got the ____"
- 29 Dierks Bentley's "Am I the ____ One"
- 32 George Strait's "The Seashores of ____ Mexico"
- 33 Reese Witherspoon's latest movie

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My favorite TV show is . . .
I Love Lucy.

My favorite color is . . .
Blue.

If I could be anyone for a day
it would be . . .
One of my kids.

I can't live without . . .
Water.

If I could change one thing
about myself it would be . . .
I'd have super-vision.

A guy can never have too
many . . .
Multi-Tools.

I wish I were . . .
On a white, sandy, clear-
water beach.

The one word that describes
my day today is . . .
Blessed.

The first thing I do in the
morning is . . .
Love on my woman.

Music is . . .
My sixth sense.

I think that _____ sucks.
Negativity.

I would love
to do a duet
with . . .
Andrea
Bocelli.



SEIZE THE STAGE

the



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FEB 23

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